

Sexual Life in Ancient China
*A Preliminary Survey of Chinese Sex and
Society from ca. 1500 B.C. till 1644 A.D.*

—
by
R.H. van Gulik

with a new introduction and bibliography

by Paul R. Goldin



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SINICA LINGVISTICA

W. L. BROWN

EDITED BY THE

INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTICS, PEKING UNIVERSITY

CHINESE LINGUISTICS

SEXUAL LIFE IN ANCIENT CHINA



THE INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTICS, PEKING UNIVERSITY
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VOLUME LVII



SEXUAL LIFE IN ANCIENT CHINA

A Pictorial History of Chinese Sex and Society



Plate A. "Rousing the Dreaming Lover" (From the Ming erotic colour-print album *Fèng-liu-chüeh-ch'ang*).



Plate B. Kālī dancing on Śiva (N. Indian miniature in colours on paper, author's collection).

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PAUL R. GOLDIN



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NOTE ON THE PRESENT EDITION

There have been certain emendations to Van Gulik's original text for this edition. My principle in all these matters has been to interfere as little as possible.

1. Certain orthographic and typographical errors have been corrected silently.

2. Romanizations of Chinese characters (Wade-Giles, with *szu* for the more conventional *ssu*) have been left intact, with the exception of some minor errors that have likewise been corrected silently. Van Gulik was fond of scholarly pronunciations that may seem unusual today, but as these are still attested in good dictionaries, they have not been changed.

3. Romanizations have been added to the index, which originally contained only Chinese characters. Furthermore, Romanized Chinese terms have been parsed and capitalized in the index so as to aid in their comprehension, but Van Gulik's own Romanizations in the text have been left as they stand. For example, on p. 320, n. 1, Van Gulik refers to a certain text as "*Chi-t'ang-liu-ju-i-shih*"; in the index, this has been Romanized as *Chi Tang Liu-ju i-shih* ("Liu-ju" being the appellation of the Ming painter T'ang Yin).

4. All passages that Van Gulik composed in Latin have been rendered into English. Preliminary English translations were submitted to the press by Josiah Davis, a Ph.D. candidate in Classics at the University of Pennsylvania. Brill's editor, Albert Hoffstädt, and the present writer have both worked on revising these translations for publication. Where the Latin is ambiguous or confusing, the reading that accords most closely with the original Chinese has been chosen. However, I have not meddled with the sense of Van Gulik's translations, even when I have not been in total agreement with them.

5. A few passages have called for brief editorial notes. These do not, however, presume to correct or improve Van Gulik's book.

6. In preparing the introduction, I am indebted to the following people for help with references: Julie Chang (Kaikodo Gallery, New York City); Martin Kern and Martin Heijdra (both of Princeton University); Eugenia Lean (University of North Carolina); Victor H. Mair and Nancy S. Steinhardt (both of the University of Pennsylvania); and Michael Puett (Harvard University).

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NOTE ON THE PRESENT EDITION

There have been certain corrections to Van Gulik's original text for this edition. My purpose in all these matters has been to interfere as little as possible.

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2. Romanizations of Chinese characters (Wade-Giles, with use for the more conventional use) have been left intact, with the exception of some minor errors and have been corrected slightly. Van Gulik was fond of scholarly pronunciation that may seem unusual today, but as these are still current in good dictionaries, they have not been changed.

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INTRODUCTION

Paul R. Goldin

Robert Hans van Gulik was born in the Dutch town of Zutphen on August 9, 1910. His father, a medical officer in the Dutch Indies, brought his family to live in Java from the time Robert Hans was three years old until he was twelve. This experience allowed the young Van Gulik to learn Chinese, Javanese, and Malay. After his family returned to Holland in 1922 and enrolled him in Dutch schools, he learned Greek, Latin, French, German, and English as well. An early acquaintance with the linguist C. C. Uhlenbeck resulted in his acquisition of Russian and Sanskrit; this association, furthermore, led to the joint publication of a dictionary of Blackfoot Indian in 1930. Thus, by the age of twenty, Van Gulik commanded at least twelve languages belonging to four different language families. Soon he would add Japanese (representing a fifth language family) and Tibetan.

In 1929, Van Gulik matriculated at Leiden, where he earned his bachelor's degree four years later. In 1935, he was awarded his doctorate at the University of Utrecht for his dissertation on the horse-cult in China, Japan, India, and Tibet. Thereafter he embarked on a long and distinguished diplomatic career, which included service in Japan, East Africa, India, Egypt, China, the United States, Lebanon, and Malaysia. At his death, on September 24, 1967, he was Holland's ambassador to Japan.¹

This resumé would be enviable in itself, but Van Gulik prided himself on his success in *three* careers: diplomat, novelist, and scholar. Among readers of English, he is probably most famous for his "Judge Dee" volumes, a series of mystery novels centering on a historical figure, the T'ang-dynasty statesman Ti Jen-chieh (630–700). The first book, published in Tokyo in 1949, was an English translation of *Wu Tse-t'ien ssu ta ch'i-an* (*Four Very Strange Cases from the Reign of Empress Wu*), an anonymous eighteenth-century novel celebrating Judge Ti and his legendary ability to crack difficult cases.² Developing into an

¹ Cf. Lawton (1981), as well as the other articles in that collection.

² As the first edition of this book is quite rare, it has been reprinted on a number of occasions, most recently by Dover in New York: *Celebrated Cases of Judge Dee (Dee Goong An): An Authentic Eighteenth-Century Chinese Detective Novel* (1976). Van Gulik explained in his postscript (225ff.) that he translated only the first part of the Chinese text, since he believed that the second part was a later and inferior addition.

accomplished author in his own right, Van Gulik then produced several other original novels in the same spirit, which he published throughout the 1950s and 60s.³ There are still many "Judge Dee" fanatics to this day.

But it is with the third Van Gulik, the scholar of Chinese history, that we are concerned here. Janwillem van de Wetering notes astutely in his recent biography that Van Gulik avoided the mainstream and specialized in subjects on the cultural margins. In his various diplomatic posts, he frequented alleys and byways, "staying in native inns, eating local foods, listening to story tellers, checking what was on sale in small stores in market stalls."⁴ While most intellectual historians were concentrating on the great traditions of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, and most social historians on Chinese economic and institutional history, Van Gulik's work skirted the major topics of academic research. His best known Sinological contributions focused on the Chinese lute (*ch'in*); the gibbon (*yüan*), China's most famous primate; and Chinese sexuality and erotica. These were not areas to which university scholars in the mid-twentieth century typically devoted their energies. Similarly, Van Gulik's well received translation of *T'ang-yin pi-shih* (*Parallel Cases from under the Pear Tree*), a thirteenth-century legal manual, was published in 1956, when Chinese law was still a neglected field.⁵ (The pioneering book by Derk Bodde and Clarence Morris, *Law in Imperial China*, did not appear until 1967.) Thus it was in many ways a blessing for posterity that Van Gulik did not pursue an academic career: freedom from the conventional pressures of tenure, book reviews, and so on allowed him to investigate subjects which university professors might have been too cautious to touch.

In his preface, Van Gulik explains the circumstances that ultimately led to the publication of *Sexual Life in Ancient China* (1961), his scholarly masterpiece:

In 1949 when I was serving as Counsellor of the Netherlands Embassy in Tōkyō, I happened to find in a curio-shop a set of old Chinese printing blocks of a Ming erotic album, entitled *Hua-ying-chin-chen* "Variegated Battle Arrays of the Flowery Camp." The blocks emanated from the collection of an old Japanese

³ These are: *The Chinese Maze Murders* (1952); *The Chinese Bell Murders* (1958); *The Chinese Gold Murders* (1959); *The Chinese Lake Murders* (1960); *The Chinese Nail Murders* (1961); *The Haunted Monastery* (1961); *The Lacquer Screen* (1962); *The Emperor's Pearl* (1963); *The Red Pavilion* (1964); *The Monkey and the Tiger* (1965); *The Willow Pattern* (1965); *Murder in Canton* (1966); *Necklace and Calabash* (1966); *The Phantom of the Temple* (1966); *Poets and Murder* (1967); and *Judge Dee at Work* (1967). Cf. Alford (1981).

⁴ Van de Wetering (1987: 10). This is a concise and sympathetic biography, but discusses only superficially the significance of Van Gulik's scholarship. Van de Wetering includes a helpful bibliography of Van Gulik's works (135-44).

⁵ The only major Western studies of Chinese law before this date were Escarra (1936) and Hulswé (1955), which had just appeared.

feudal house in W[estern] Japan that in the 18th century had been closely connected with the China trade. Since such albums are now exceedingly rare, and important from both the artistic and the sociological point of view, I thought it my duty to make this material available to other research workers. My original plan was to have a few copies struck off from those blocks and publish them in a limited edition, adding a brief preface on the historical background of Chinese erotic art.

For writing that preface I needed some knowledge of ancient Chinese sexual life and habits. In my Chinese studies I had till then always shirked this subject, because I felt that this was a field best left to qualified sexologists—especially since I had gathered from casual remarks in older and later Western books on China that pathologia sexualis was largely represented there. Now that I was obliged to orientate myself on the subject, however, I found that there was practically no serious literature available, either in standard Chinese sources or in Western books and treatises on China. . . .

My orientation on this subject thus resulted in the conclusion that [the] publication of the erotic album mentioned above implied acquitting myself of a double duty. Besides making available the rare artistic material, I had at the same time to set right foreign misconceptions regarding sexual life in ancient China.

The "preface" of my reprint of the erotic album grew into a treatise of more than two hundred pages, and when in 1951 I finally published my book under the title of "Erotic Colour Prints of the Ming Period, with an Essay on Chinese Sex Life from the Han to the Ch'ing Dynasty, B.C. 206–A.D. 1644," it comprised three volumes. Since this book contained reproductions of erotic prints and other data that ought not to fall into the hands of unqualified readers, I limited the edition to fifty copies only, all of which I presented to various Oriental and Western universities, museums and other centres of research. (xxxi–xxxiii)

Five years later, Brill commissioned Van Gulik to compose the present volume. For this project, the author revised *Erotic Colour Prints of the Ming Period* from the ground up: "I added pre-Han data, left out the detailed material on erotic art, and expanded the rest so as to present a more general picture of Chinese sexual life, suited for broader circles of anthropologists and sexologists" (xxxiv).

Van Gulik's account sheds light not only on the path-breaking nature of his work, but also on some of his methodological foundations, which modern readers must bear in mind. First, his language reveals considerable anxiety about sexuality as a topic of academic research. At first, he tells us, he preferred to leave the subject to "sexologists," a term denoting researchers engaged in the scientific study of sex. Today's discourse has largely abandoned, along with scientism in general, the pretense that sex can and ought to be studied scientifically. But Van Gulik was genuinely worried that materials on sex might fall into what he considered the wrong hands, and he took substantial measures to ensure that only readers with certain qualifications ("research workers") had access to his work. His decision to limit the circulation of *Erotic Colour Prints of the Ming Period* to fifty copies has had the consequence that it is now

extremely difficult to find.⁶ Related concerns must have motivated Van Gulik's practice of rendering all explicit passages into Latin, presumably on the assumption that only educated readers—the kind who would consult the book for acceptable reasons—could understand that language. This attitude smacks of elitism and is clearly outmoded today (it might have seemed old-fashioned already in 1961). For the present edition, Brill has taken the laudable step of translating all the Latin into English.⁷

The deference to “sexology,” and especially the reference to “*pathologia sexualis*,” raise one of the most important issues to be confronted in assessing Van Gulik's work: his overarching thesis that traditional Chinese sexual habits were, despite allegations to the contrary, “healthy and normal” (xxxii). It is regrettable that Van Gulik did not mention specifically which Western books on China made the accusation of “*pathologia sexualis*,” for then we would have a better understanding today of the position that he was trying to argue against. We are left instead to reconstruct what Van Gulik might have considered “depraved and abnormal” on the one hand, and “healthy and normal” on the other—and, more generally, how he understood the relevance of such rubrics as perversion, health, and normality to the study of sex.

Scholars have begun to note the theoretical difficulties of Van Gulik's approach. For example, Charlotte Furth (1994: 127) writes in her trenchant study, “Rethinking Van Gulik”:

Van Gulik's message to his mid-twentieth-century English-speaking readers was that traditional Chinese sexual norms were healthy, neither “repressed” (50) nor “perverted” (157). Van Gulik's criteria here are those of Freudian discourse: what is repressive is abstinence, while perversions divert libido away from its proper genital outlets or channel it into sadomasochistic cruelties.

In fact, the concept of “sexual perversion” goes back to European psychiatrists at least a generation before Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). The concept was introduced as a category of mental illness in the 1870s; before this, the word “perversion” had been used primarily in religious contexts.⁸ The most famous doctor from that period is Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840–1902), who coined, among other terms, “sadism,” “masochism,” and “pedophilia,” and whose most celebrated book, *Psychopathia sexualis* (1924, 1965; first published 1886), dominated the field of sexual pathology for decades. (Before Krafft-Ebing, “sadism” had been a literary term.) The drive to analyze sexual behavior as a possible manifestation of psychiatric disease is intertwined with the professionalization of psychiatry in the late nineteenth century, when medical

⁶ Now and then one can find undated black-and-white copies published under murky circumstances in East Asia. There is a recent Chinese translation: Kao Lo-p'ei (1992).

⁷ See the “Note on the Present Edition.”

⁸ Cf. Angus McLaren (1997: 177).

doctors asserted the authority to determine "healthy" and "unhealthy" sexual impulses.⁹ Consequently, reading perversion or lack of perversion back into historical periods is fundamentally anachronistic. We may be at liberty to decide for ourselves what sexual practices we find appropriate and inappropriate, but we cannot presume to correlate such preferences with health and disease unless we are prepared to accept a psychiatric paradigm that is patently alien to the traditional Chinese world-view. Only recently, however, have historians become aware of these interpretive hazards; in Van Gulik's time, they were largely unappreciated.

Van Gulik discloses precisely what he means by "pathologia sexualis" in a brief catalogue of "pathological phenomena" in Chinese literature, concluding that the record is meager and "proves that the ancient Chinese led a sexual life that on the whole can be characterized as normal and healthy" (169). The alleged pathologies are: sadism; masochism; homosexuality; masturbation with sexual aids (olisboi, "tinkling balls," etc.); bestiality; incest; and "scatological material," by which he means sexual activity involving feces and urine. His implicit conception of sexual pathology is *more* rigid than that of the nineteenth-century physicians who first delineated the taxonomies of sexual deviance. For Krafft-Ebing, acts do not in themselves constitute perversion. As Harry Oosterhuis (2000: 47) explains, "perversion was considered as a permanent constitutional disorder—be it inborn or acquired—that affected the whole personality, whereas perversity was just passing immoral conduct of normal persons."¹⁰ Simply listing eccentric activities is not sufficient, therefore, to demonstrate perversion. For these reasons, Krafft-Ebing rarely discusses female masochists: he takes it as a matter of course that males should be aggressive and females passive. Only when an individual seeks pain and humiliation for its own sake, and not merely as a component of coitus, can one speak of a pathological masochist in Krafft-Ebing's sense. So the trouble with Van Gulik's discourse of perversion is twofold. Not only is the concept wholly inapplicable to traditional China, but its usage in *Sexual Life in Ancient China* is idiosyncratic even in its own context.

Later scholars have castigated Van Gulik on this score, but their criticisms have tended to focus on his presentation of the facts, rather than on his methodological presuppositions. Consider the opinion of Kristofer Schipper (1993: 145–47):

For Van Gulik China is, in matters of sexuality, the land of natural simplicity, thanks to the fact that it has remained completely ignorant of the Jewish and Christian belief in original sin. In China, the union of man and woman imitates

⁹ Two standard studies are Davidson (1990) and Foucault (1978–86).

¹⁰ See also Hauser (1994).

the harmony of Heaven and Earth, and that idea certainly seems beautiful, good for the health, and right. . . .

In fact, there are many indications that show that, contrary to what Van Gulik wants us to believe, sexuality was never very *natural* and nonproblematic in China. The very existence of a vast erotic literature, from as early as the second century B.C., as well as a great number of sexual handbooks (from which Van Gulik gathered much of his wisdom), bear in themselves more than enough testimony to this fact. . . .

It is nonsense to think that sexuality in traditional China was practiced freely. On the contrary, the central place which cosmology attributes to the concepts of *yin* and *yang* strongly indicates, as Marcel Granet liked to point out, that sex in China was always "far more sacred than for us!" . . . The open love and sexual play described in the manuals are not much part of the picture. Conjugal sex is more adequately characterized as *coitus furtivus*. It is in the context of concealment and suppression that we must reconsider Chinese erotic literature.¹¹

In other words, Schipper rejects Van Gulik's thesis on the grounds that sex was commonly ritualized, concealed, and suppressed in traditional China.¹² No doubt Schipper makes an important point: Chinese views of sex were hardly "natural" and simple; they were highly complex. But there is a larger argument to be made: the whole concept of perversion should be off-limits to historians in the first place. Men and women of the past did not live their lives according to Victorian prejudices.

One of the outstanding accomplishments of *Sexual Life in Ancient China* was to present substantial excerpts of the ancient Chinese sex manuals to Western readers (125–54). Titles of such works had long been known from ancient bibliographies, but the texts themselves were presumed to have been lost, until a Japanese chrestomathy of Chinese medical literature, compiled by Tamba Yasuyori in 982–984 and entitled *Ishimpō*, was published in Japan in 1854 (after centuries of limited circulation in manuscript form). Chapter 28 of this corpus, entitled "Fang-nei" ("Within the Bedchamber"), contains quotations from a variety of sex manuals that would otherwise never have survived. The Chinese scholar Yeh Te-hui (1864–1927) spent over ten years reconstructing the texts from Chapter 28 of *Ishimpō*, culminating in a publication called *Shuang-mei ching-an ts'ung-shu* (*Light and Shade under the Twin Plum Trees*). This anthology was decried by the somber literati; in Van Gulik's words, they "branded him with the *hic niger est*" (123). But Yeh's work made these unique texts avail-

¹¹ The "belief in original sin" is Christian, but not Jewish. The remark by Granet was reported to Schipper by one of Granet's students.

¹² In another publication (1969: 7), incidentally, Schipper seems to take a different line: "Sexuality, far from being relegated to a clandestine and apocryphal sphere, is found to be the pivot of ideas and activities."

able to the Chinese public, and Van Gulik in turn translated them for Western readers.

Van Gulik's view of this literature is distinctive and has been the subject of much critical discussion:

The handbooks lay great stress on the necessity of a man understanding the sexual needs and sexual behaviour of his womenfolk. They teach the householder the fundamental difference in pre- and post-orgasm experiences of man and woman, using the simple simile of fire and water.¹³ Then the handbooks apply this simile to the preliminaries of sexual union, instructing the man as to how he should gradually prepare the woman prior to every copulation. The texts warn a man again and again not to force himself or one of his women to engage in the sexual act if both partners are not in complete emotional harmony.

In the description of the act itself the reader will notice that the importance of making the woman reach orgasm during every coitus is constantly stressed, while it is also significant that the signs by which the man may gauge the degree of the woman's pleasure during the act are described with such meticulous care. . . . It is true that, as mentioned above, *they commonly thought that the liquids emitted from a woman's vagina when she reaches orgasm benefit a man's health if he absorbs them through his penis*;¹⁴ at the same time, however, consideration of the woman's right to sexual satisfaction was certainly also in the mind of those who formulated these rules. (155f.)

This understanding of the manuals has been particularly influential among non-specialists,¹⁵ but a number of scholars have objected that it is misleading. (It may be mentioned in passing that the notion of a woman's "rights" is inappropriate to traditional China.) One of the most challenging critiques is the aforementioned article by Charlotte Furth. The purpose of the manuals is to instruct readers—who were almost always assumed to be male¹⁶—in the art

¹³ A commonplace in the manuals: men, like fire, are quickly aroused but quickly exhausted; women, like water, take longer both to heat and to cool. [PRG]

¹⁴ Passages that originally appeared in Latin will be routinely italicized in citations here.

¹⁵ Two prominent examples: Tannahill (1992: 177 *et passim*); Kristeva (1977: 62ff.).

¹⁶ Furth (1994: 133) asserts that "the implied reader of the text is always a man, never a woman," but the following passage from *Yü-fang pi-chüeh* (in Van Gulik's translation) may be a counterexample:

When a woman copulates with a man her heart should be quiet and her thoughts composed. *If the man has not yet reached orgasm and the woman feels that she is about to climax, she should restrain herself. If she feels that she is about to respond to him, she should stop moving up and down (yielding to the man's movements) so she does not empty her Yin essence.* For if her Yin essence is exhausted (through the orgasm), a vacuum is created in her system that will make her susceptible to disease. Neither should a woman allow herself to become jealous or sad when she sees her man copulate with another woman, for then her Yin essence will become over-excited. She will be afflicted by pains while sitting and standing, *and the vaginal emissions will flow spontaneously.* These are ills that will cause a woman to wither, and age before her time. Therefore she should guard against this. (158)

These admonitions appear in a section devoted to the art of taking *ch'i* from a man and may be addressed to female practitioners. Nevertheless, part of their purpose may be to warn men

of attaining immortality by absorbing the life-essence of partners in sexual intercourse. The fluids emitted at the moment of orgasm, semen for males and vaginal secretions for females, were understood as *ching*, or refined *ch'i*, of which every human being had only a finite store. In an exchange of *ch'i* during copulation, if one partner knew how to absorb the other's *ching* without losing his or her own, the physical benefits could be considerable. If one repeatedly obtained *ch'i* in this manner, one might attain immortality, albeit at the direct expense of one's bedfellow. This was the technique that the manuals revealed.¹⁷

Although most of their specific prescriptions are aimed at males, both men and women could, in principle, apply these teachings, and at times the manuals refer to this possibility explicitly. Consider the following passage from *Yü-fang pi-chüeh* (*Secret Instructions of the Jade Chamber*), in Van Gulik's translation:

It is not only the male potency that can be nurtured; the same applies to the female potency. The Queen of the Western Paradise, Hsi-wang-mu, is an example of a woman who obtained the Way (of attaining immortality) by nurturing her Yin essence. Everytime she had intercourse with a man he would immediately fall ill, but her own face was smooth and transparent so that she had no need for rouge or face powder. She always fed on milk and played the five-stringed lute so that her heart was always harmonious and her thoughts composed and she had no other desires. Also: The Queen of the Western Paradise had no husband, but she liked to copulate with young boys. This secret, however, must not be divulged, lest other women should try to imitate to Queen's methods. (158)

This macrobiotic regimen explains why it is crucial for the male to induce the female's orgasm: the act is useless to him unless he can consume her *ch'i* at the moment of her climax. Similarly, the male must resist the urge to emit his own *ch'i*, either by ejaculating or suppressing his orgasm entirely. Van Gulik, as we have seen, praised such recommendations as an acknowledgement of "the woman's right to sexual satisfaction." But the truth is much more sinister: concern for the woman's orgasm is motivated entirely by the desire to use her body as a natural resource.

Accordingly, these texts thoroughly objectify women. To quote *Yü-fang pi-chüeh* again:

The Taoist of the Green Buffalo said: "If a man continually changes the women with whom he copulates the benefit will be great. If in one night one can copulate with more than ten women it is best. If one always copulates with one and the same woman her vital essence will gradually grow weaker and in the end

of the dangers of copulating with women who possess this skill, and it is true that the overwhelming majority of passages imply a male reader.

¹⁷ Cf. Goldin (2002: 6f.), and the references cited there.

she will be in no fit condition to give the man benefit. Moreover the woman herself will become emaciated." (138)

Other passages from *Yü-fang pi-chüeh*, not translated by Van Gulik, relate that the ideal woman is an unsuspecting victim who knows nothing of these occult arts. She should be as young as possible—presumably because older women will have lost more blood through menstruation—and should not have borne children:

If a man wishes to derive the greatest benefit, it is best to find a woman who has no knowledge of this *tao*. If he chooses young maidens for mounting, his complexion too will become like a maiden's. When it comes to women, one should be vexed only by their not being young. If one can obtain those between fourteen or fifteen and eighteen or nineteen, this is the best. In any event, they should not exceed thirty. Those not yet thirty but who have given birth are of no benefit. My late master handed down this *tao* and lived for 3,000 years. If [one combines this practice with] drugs, one can attain immortality.

Those who seek to practice the *tao* of uniting *yin* and *yang* for the purpose of gaining *ch'i* and cultivating life must not limit themselves to just one woman. You should get three or nine or eleven; the more the better. Absorb her *ching* secretions by mounting the "vast spring" and "returning the *ching*." Your skin will become glossy, your body light, your eyes bright, and your *ch'i* so strong that you will be able to overcome all your enemies. Old men will feel like twenty and young men will feel their strength increased a hundredfold.¹⁸

A girl of fourteen *sui* would be twelve or thirteen years old by our reckoning, and might be prepubescent.

Certain other manuals stress the importance of pleasing a woman so as to keep her by one's side as willing thrall in a state of constant sexual readiness. *T'ien-hsia chih tao t'an* (*Discourse on the Supreme Tao under Heaven*), an ancient manual excavated in 1973 at Ma-wang-tui (and hence not available to Van Gulik), is illustrative: this text offers detailed advice about how to treat a harem girl, so that in the end "she will be intimate with you as with a brother, and will cherish you as a parent,"¹⁹ with no inkling of her patron's predatory designs.

In *Erotic Colour Prints of the Ming Period*, Van Gulik's account of the bedroom manuals was less rosy than the view expressed in *Sexual Life in Ancient China*. In the earlier work, he dubbed the whole process "sexual vampirism"²⁰ and suggested that it had contributed to the deprecation of women in traditional China. Joseph Needham, the eminent historian of Chinese science, then

¹⁸ Tr. Wile (1992: 102). "Returning the *ching*" refers to ejaculation.

¹⁹ Text in Ma (1992: 1072). I cannot agree with Wawrytko (2000: 177), who writes that in *T'ien-hsia chih tao t'an*, "women are not perceived as sources of energy to be exploited, but rather as equal partners in the ensuing benefits of intercourse."

²⁰ Van Gulik retains this term in *Sexual Life* on p. 317.

responded to Van Gulik's arguments, as Van Gulik himself recalls in the preface to *Sexual Life*:

[Needham] consulted the copy of my book which I had presented to the library of his university, and found himself in disagreement with my unfavourable remarks on certain Taoist sexual disciplines. I must confess that those Taoist practices had rather shocked me at first and as a reaction I had characterized them as "sexual vampirism." Although when studying these matters as a layman it is difficult to maintain always the proper detached attitude of mind, I went much too far in stating that Taoist thought had exercised a detrimental influence on the treatment and position of women in ancient China. Needham pointed out to me in private correspondence that on the contrary Taoism had on the whole enhanced the position of Chinese women in general. Needham showed me that my interpretation of Taoist data had been too narrow, and that his broader views were indeed right. (xxxiii)

As Van Gulik then avers, he was eager to be convinced of Needham's "broader views," for they only strengthened his own thesis, discussed above, that Chinese sexual practices were not "depraved." But with hindsight, we can see today that Van Gulik's earlier thoughts on the matter were more judicious, and it is a pity that he allowed himself to be hectored.

In any case, Van Gulik's handling of the sources is still superior to that of Needham. Their respective comments on the Taoist rite of *ho-ch'i* ("joining the *ch'i*") are instructive. Needham (1954-: II, 150f.) treats *ho-ch'i* as though it were simply another application of the bedroom art of *ch'i*-exchange, but that reflects a grave misconception. Kristofer Schipper (1993: 150f.) has since analyzed the rite on the basis of the only surviving account in the Taoist Canon, *Shang-ch'ing huang-shu kuo-tu i* (*Salvation Protocols of the Yellow Book of Highest Purity*). He has demonstrated that the goal was not, as in *Yü-fang pi-chüeh* and similar texts, to steal the life-essence of one's partner, but to partake of a sincere communal ritual in which men and women, under the direction of an ordained Taoist Master, are brought into harmony with the universe around them. Strident opposition to the *ho-ch'i* ritual, especially in Buddhist circles, eventually led even leaders of the Taoist Church to repudiate it, and most later discussions are colored by the misrepresentations of detractors.²¹

Van Gulik, on the other hand, rightly places *ho-ch'i* in the context of what he calls the "sexual mysticism" of various Taoist sects (88ff.), separate from the world of the bedroom manuals. For the handbooks belong to a tradition of macrobiotic self-cultivation that long antedates the foundation of Taoism in A.D. 142 (the year of the revelation to the Taoist patriarch Chang Tao-ling). This should have been apparent even in Needham's day—ample references in *Lao-tzu*, *Chuang-tzu*, *Nei-yeh* (*Internal Enterprise*), and other texts attest

²¹ Cf. Goldin (2002: 118f.).

to the early currency of such practices²²—and the situation is only clearer today, after the discovery of pertinent manuscripts in the Han-dynasty tombs at Ma-wang-tui and Chang-chia-shan.²³ In a strict sense, the bedroom manuals are not “Taoist” at all: it was always possible to employ their techniques without being a member of a Taoist congregation, just as religious Taoists did not necessarily subscribe to the bedroom arts.

These are the major lines of criticism that *Sexual Life in Ancient China* has elicited since its publication over forty years ago. The remaining task of this introduction is to survey the new sources, both primary and secondary,²⁴ that have emerged since 1961. The most important of these are probably *Ho yin-yang* (*Joining Yin and Yang*) and the above-mentioned *T'ien-hsia chih tao t'an*, two macrobiotic texts from Ma-wang-tui that now anchor the tradition of the bedroom manuals in the early Han dynasty, if not the late Warring States period.²⁵ The flurry of new textual material excavated archaeologically since the 1970s is causing a wholesale re-appraisal of early Chinese history and society, and a number of these manuscripts have a direct bearing on the study of women. Legal texts from Shui-hu-ti and Chang-chia-shan, for example, frequently deal with such problems as marriage, adultery, and the position of women in society.²⁶ New materials are being excavated at least as fast as scholars are able to analyze them, and the next twenty years promise exciting new discoveries and advances.

Another indispensable primary source is *Shang-ch'ing huang-shu kuo-tu i*, which has been dated to the A.D. fourth or fifth century. Strictly speaking, this cannot be considered “new,” since the text has been present in the Taoist Canon for centuries, but its significance was not appreciated in the West before the work of Kristofer Schipper (described above). Whereas earlier scholars who wished to reconstruct the *ho-ch'i* ritual were forced to rely on disparaging notices

²² Cf. Harper (1999: 880ff.). For a recent translation and discussion of *Nei-yeh*, see Roth (1999).

²³ There is now a complete English translation of the Ma-wang-tui medical manuscripts: Harper (1998). The medical manuscripts from Chang-chia-shan are not yet available in translation. See *Chang-chia-shan Han-mu chu-chien* (2001).

²⁴ As Van Gulik's book ends with the fall of the Ming dynasty in 1644, the references hereafter will not take into account the modern period. Moreover, the following bibliographical lists should be taken as representative rather than exhaustive.

²⁵ Translations: Wile (1992: 77–83); and Harper (1998: 412–22 and 425–38). See also Harper (1987).

²⁶ The only complete translation of the legal texts from Shui-hu-ti is Hulswé (1985); there are also a number of studies by Robin D. S. Yates (1981, 1985–87, 1987). For an example of their application to the history of sexuality, see e.g. Goldin (2002: 94). As mentioned in n. 23, above, there are as yet no translations of the Chang-chia-shan manuscripts. For a preliminary discussion of their value to women's history, see Raphals (2001: 187f.).

in Buddhist works,²⁷ more current studies enjoy the benefit of the authentic testimony in *Shang-ch'ing huang-shu kuo-tu i*.²⁸

Although Van Gulik furnished the first English translations of the bedroom manuals, he omitted sizable portions for unexplained reasons. There have been a handful of recent works that attempt complete translations, of which the best is Douglas Wile's *Art of the Bedchamber* (1992).²⁹ Readers interested in these texts should also consult Li Ling's magisterial *Chung-kuo fang-shu k'ao* (2000), which includes a detailed study of the Ma-wang-tui texts, as well as two invaluable appendices: a complete transcription of the Ma-wang-tui manuals, and all the original texts as cited in *Ishimpō*.³⁰ Other secondary studies of traditional Chinese sex practices are of uneven quality.³¹ There are a few works on homosexuality,³² and some important new studies of sex and law.³³ Sex in art³⁴ is a neglected subject not broached in any of the standard textbooks.

The only book devoted exclusively to ancient times is my *Culture of Sex in Ancient China* (2002), but there has been a considerable amount of work in the late imperial and contemporary periods. The two great erotic novels that Van Gulik discusses in *Sexual Life in Ancient China*, namely *Jou p'u-t'uan* and *Chin-p'ing-mei*, are available now in authoritative translations,³⁵ and the subject of women and sexuality in literature has produced a number of book-length studies and anthologies.³⁶ But by far the most work has appeared in women's history and gender studies.³⁷ This is a field that has burgeoned remarkably since

²⁷ For example, Maspero (1971: 571) wrote erroneously that "le rituel de cette fête ne nous est parvenu: il a probablement été éliminé du *Tao-tsang*."

²⁸ See Kobayashi (1990: 357–66), who places the text at the end of the Liu-Sung dynasty (420–478). Schipper (1993: 151) says that "it has come down to us in a version from the early Middle Ages (fourth century A.D.)."

²⁹ Far less successful are Levy and Ishihara (1989) and Hsia *et al.* (1986).

³⁰ See also Ling and McMahon (1992). Incidentally, Li Ling and others have translated *Sexual Life in Ancient China* into Chinese: Kao Lo-p'ei (1990).

³¹ Wile (1992: 62–69) discusses some popular works. In addition to the titles cited there, the reader may consult Chou (1971). One serious monograph that is rarely cited is Englert (1980). Englert is also the co-author of a short article on the notorious lady Nan-tzu, whose *rendezvous* with Confucius earned him the censure of his disciples (*Analekts* 6.26): Englert and Ptak (1986).

³² The best known is Hinsch (1990). See also Meijer (1985); Murray (1992); Ng (1989); Ruan and Tsai (1987). Ruan is the author of another book on Chinese sexuality: Ruan (1991).

³³ Sommer (2000) is a prodigious achievement based entirely on archival research. See also Bernhardt (1996, 1999); Meijer (1991); and Ng (1987).

³⁴ Beurdeley (1969); James Cahill (1996, 1998, 1999); Goldin (2001); Laing (1996); Nakano (2001); Yimen (1997).

³⁵ Hanan (1990); at the time of this writing, the first two volumes of Roy (1993–) have been published. There will soon be a translation of *Ju-i-chün chuan*, a novelette of the same genre: Stone (forthcoming).

³⁶ Chang and Saussy (1999); Edwards (1994); Huang (2001); Wai-see Li (1993); Anne E. McLaren (1994); McMahon (1988, 1994, 1995); Rouzer (2001); Wu (1995a, 1995b).

³⁷ Birge (2002); Brownell and Wasserstrom (2002); Carlitz (1991, 1994, 1997); Cass (1999); Chung (1981); Cutter and Crowell (1999); Ebrey (1993); Elvin (1984); Guisso and Johannesen (1981); Hinsch (2002); Ko (1994a, 1994b); Lee (1994); Mann (1999); Mann and Cheng (2001);

1990, and within a few years it will probably not be possible to supply even a representative list of titles in a single note. Other topics that have begun to receive attention are philosophy and religion³⁸ and science and medicine.³⁹ Footbinding will probably always be an area of specialized interest.⁴⁰

Finally, a word about Chinese scholarship. For most of the twentieth century, publications in Chinese were, no doubt for political reasons, almost completely silent on the subject of sexuality. But the environment has begun to change. One new title is noteworthy for its sheer size: *Hei Erh-shih-ssu shih* (*The Black Dynastic Histories*, over 4,000 pages *quarto*), a collection of twenty-four expository histories covering such "black" topics as prostitution, footbinding, crime, and sex.⁴¹ China's pre-eminent historian of sexuality is Liu Ta-lin, to whom scholars are indebted for a number of useful studies (1993, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000). Liu is also the owner of an unparalleled collection of erotic *objets d'art*, which he has exhibited for the past few years in a Sex Museum in Shanghai. The tribulations that he and his financial partners have faced in trying to keep the museum open are a fitting symbol of China's uneasy relationship with its sexual past.⁴²

It has become evident with the passage of time that *Sexual Life in Ancient China* is one of those rare and monumental achievements that open an entirely new field. For most of the topics that it covers, it remains one of the very few studies available in any language. Part of the reason for its enduring value must be Van Gulik's encyclopedic knowledge of the Chinese tradition. Despite the substantial advantages that scholars enjoy today, few will be able to master in the course of an entire lifetime as many texts as are marshalled in this one monograph. Every critic recognizes that we are building on Van Gulik's foundations. The book stands as a testament to his erudition and intellectual courage.

Mou (2002); Tung (2000); Watson and Ebrey (1991); Widmer and Chang (1997); Wolf and Witke (1975); Zurndorfer (1999). There are two bibliographies, now obsolescent, from exactly the same date: Cheng *et al.* (1984) and Wei (1984).

³⁸ Bumbacher (1998); Suzanne Cahill (1993); Ching (1994); Despeux (1986); Henry (1999); Ko (1996); Chenyang Li (2000); Martin-Liao (1984); Overmyer (1991); Raphals (1998); Wang (forthcoming).

³⁹ Bray (1997); Furth (1999).

⁴⁰ Jackson (1997); Ko (2001); Levy (1966); Wang (2000).

⁴¹ Tu *et al.* (1998). It is poorly edited even for a compilation of this magnitude, but the collection succeeds in bringing together a massive amount of information. There is also a *Hei Tzu-chih T'ung-chien*.

⁴² Mooney (2002).

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PREFACE

Plan and scope of the present book are best explained by a brief account of how it came into existence. Books have their fates, and those of the present volume were unusually complicated.

In 1949 when I was serving as Counsellor of the Netherlands Embassy in Tōkyō, I happened to find in a curio-shop a set of old Chinese printing blocks of a Ming erotic album, entitled *Hua-yīng-chín-chên* "Variegated Battle Arrays of the Flowery Camp". The blocks emanated from the collection of an old Japanese feudal house in W.-Japan that in the 18th century had been closely connected with the China trade. Since such albums are now exceedingly rare, and important from both the artistic and the sociological point of view, I thought it my duty to make this material available to other research workers. My original plan was to have a few copies struck off from those blocks and publish them in a limited edition, adding a brief preface on the historical background of Chinese erotic art.

For writing that preface I needed some knowledge of ancient Chinese sexual life and habits. In my Chinese studies I had till then always shirked this subject, because I felt that this was a field best left to qualified sexologists—especially since I had gathered from casual remarks in older and later Western books on China that *pathologia sexualis* was largely represented there. Now that I was obliged to orientate myself on the subject, however, I found that there was practically no serious literature available, either in standard Chinese sources or in Western books and treatises on China.

The silence of Chinese reference books proved to be due to the excessive prudery that took hold of the Chinese during the Ch'ing or Manchu Dynasty (1644–1912). No phase of human activity is left undescribed in the many colossal repositories of literary information compiled during the Ch'ing period—with the exception of sex. The desire to eschew the more carnal aspects of love in art and literature is of course in itself commendable enough. It gives indeed a favourable impression especially in a time like the present when both in East and West this aspect is stressed in word and picture to such an extent as to obscure the fundamental spiritual significance of the sexual act. But the Chinese of the Ch'ing period fell into the other extreme. They showed a nearly frantic desire to keep their sexual life secret from all outsiders.

The paucity of Western writings on Chinese sexual life is partly explained by the resulting difficulty which Western observers in China encountered when

trying to obtain pertinent data. I found no special Western publication on the subject worth serious attention, and a disconcertingly large amount of pure rubbish.

Thus since neither the generally accessible Chinese sources nor foreign literature supplied the data I needed for my orientation, I had to enquire whether there could not perhaps be found lesser-known sources in China or Japan. It then appeared that although in China itself former censors had done their work so thoroughly that there was practically nothing left in Ch'ing literature, in Japan important old Chinese texts on sex matters had been preserved, texts that had entered Japan as early as the seventh century A.D. These texts having indicated the direction in which I had to search for more data, I could then locate in old Chinese medical and Taoist literature a number of passages which corroborated and complemented the data preserved in Japan.

Moreover, by the generosity of some Chinese and Japanese private collectors of woodprints, I was able to study a few Ming erotic picture albums and sexual texts of that period in their possession, all of which are of extreme rarity, and some of them unica.

An examination of the material thus assembled convinced me that the current foreign conception of the depraved and abnormal sexual habits of the ancient Chinese was completely wrong. As might be expected of a highly cultured and thoughtful people like the Chinese, they did indeed since early times give a great deal of attention to sex matters. Their observations are embodied in the "handbooks of sex", manuals teaching the householder how to conduct his relations with his womenfolk. These books existed already two thousand years ago, and were widely studied till about the 13th century. Thereafter Confucianist puritanism gradually restricted the circulation of literature of this genre. And after the advent of the Ch'ing dynasty in 1644 A.D. this puritanism, strengthened by political and emotional factors, resulted in the above-mentioned secretiveness about sex matters that obsessed the Chinese ever afterwards. Ch'ing writers assert that this secretiveness has always existed, and that the rigid separation of the sexes was in full force already two thousand years ago. One of the main arguments of the present publication is to refute such arbitrary allegations, and to show that until the 13th century the separation of the sexes was not strictly enforced, and sexual relations freely talked and written about.

The ancient Chinese had indeed no reason for hiding their sexual life. Their handbooks of sex prove clearly that their sexual habits were healthy and normal—at any rate by the norms of the polygamic system that has prevailed in China from the oldest known times till recent years.

My orientation on this subject thus resulted in the conclusion that publication of the erotic album mentioned above implied acquitting myself of a double duty. Besides making available the rare artistic material, I had at the same

time to set right foreign misconception regarding sexual life in ancient China.

The "preface" to my reprint of the erotic album grew into a treatise of more than two hundred pages, and when in 1951 I finally published my book under the title of "Erotic Colour Prints of the Ming Period, with an Essay on Chinese Sex Life from the Han to the Ch'ing Dynasty, B.C. 206–A.D. 1644", it comprised three volumes. Since this book contained reproductions of erotic prints and other data that ought not to fall into the hands of unqualified readers, I limited the edition to fifty copies only, all of which I presented to various Oriental and Western universities, museums and other centres of research.¹

I thought that with the publication of this book I could consider my own work in this field as concluded, and had better leave a further study of various special aspects of the subject to qualified sexologists.

However, while I was publishing my book, Dr. Joseph Needham, Reader in Biochemistry in the University of Cambridge had, quite independently, started working on ancient Taoist sexual alchemy to gather material for his monumental series "Science and Civilization in China". He consulted the copy of my book which I had presented to the library of his university, and found himself in disagreement with my unfavourable remarks on certain Taoist sexual disciplines. I must confess that those Taoist practices had rather shocked me at first and as a reaction I had characterized them as "sexual vampirism". Although when studying these matters as a layman it is difficult to maintain always the proper detached attitude of mind, I went much too far in stating that Taoist thought had exercised a detrimental influence on the treatment and position of woman in ancient China. Needham pointed out to me in private correspondence that on the contrary Taoism had on the whole influenced favourably the development of sexual relations, and enhanced the position of Chinese woman in general. Needham showed me that my interpretation of Taoist data had been too narrow, and that his broader views were indeed right. The reader is referred to footnote f. on page 146 of Volume II of Needham's series which was then printing.

Thereafter Sinological colleagues proposed in their reviews of my book various other corrections and additions,² while I myself found during my Chinese reading a number of new data. Although none of these findings affected the main argument of my book—Needham's observations on the contrary strengthened it—I felt that they ought to be placed on record, and contemplated publishing a supplement to my book on the colour prints. When in 1956 the

¹ For those wishing to consult the book a list of those institutions is added in Appendix II of the present publication.

² I mention gratefully the detailed and constructive reviews by Prof. Herbert Franke in "Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft", vol. 105 (1955) pp. 380–387, and by Prof. Rolf Stein in "Journal Asiatique", 1952, pages 532–536.

publisher of the present volume proposed to me that I write a book on ancient Chinese sex and society, I decided that this was a good occasion for entirely re-writing the historical part of my book. I added pre-Han data, left out the detailed material on erotic art, and expanded the rest so as to present a more general picture of Chinese sexual life, suited for broader circles of anthropologists and sexologists.

It was in this manner that the present book on "Sexual Life in Ancient China" came into being.

As they now stand, my two books complement each other. Taking as point of departure the same basic Chinese texts, "Erotic Colour Prints of the Ming Period" then concentrates on the development of the colour print and Chinese erotic art in general, whereas "Sexual Life in Ancient China" takes a broader historical perspective and develops the argument along more general sociological lines.¹

As regards the period covered by the present study, I found I had to interpret the adjective "ancient" in a wider sense than the Chinese themselves usually do. They apply this term as a rule to the early half of their history, from ca. 1500 B.C. till ca. 200 A.D. However, Chinese civilization continued thereafter in an unbroken line till today. In order to present an all-round picture that could serve also as background for a further study of sexual life in more recent times, I had to extend my survey up to 1644 A.D. Then the Manchus conquered China, and there occurred profound changes in the Chinese attitude to sex. That date therefore supplies a logical and convenient point to end.

Also the term "sexual life" is taken here in a rather wide sense. Especially with regard to a culture as that of China which developed in an environment in many respects so different from our own, a mere account of sexual relations seemed of small use. In order to appraise those relations correctly, the reader must acquire at least a general impression of the social and cultural background. I have tried to supply that information, necessarily in a highly condensed form, and concentrating on such narrowly related subjects as housing, dress and personal adornment.

All these sexual, cultural, economical, artistic and literary data had to be arranged in a historical frame, so as to show their evolution. Therefore I divided the period treated into four main historical parts, covering roughly

¹ In the present volume mistakes in "Erotic Colour Prints" are corrected, and most suggestions made by various critics followed up. This book also gives my revised appraisal of Taoist sexual alchemy, and the reader is requested to consider all references in ECP to "Taoist vampirism" and "black magic" as cancelled.

first: 1500 B.C. till A.D.; second: A.D. till 600; third: 600 till 1200, and fourth: 1200 till 1644. These four parts together are again subdivided into ten chapters, each of which deals with one more or less circumscribed period in Chinese history.

It would of course have been impossible to present, within the limits of a general handbook, a comprehensive picture of sexual relations during each of those ten periods. Moreover it is doubtful whether our present knowledge of Chinese social history has sufficiently advanced for justifying an attempt at detailed treatment.

I have tried to give a more comprehensive picture—in the briefest possible manner—only in Chapters I and II which deal with the early period and at the same time are meant as a general introduction. Thereafter every chapter emphasizes some special aspects of sexual life.

Chapter III (Ch'in and Former Han Dynasty) stresses sex in society, Chapter IV (Later Han Dynasty) sex and Taoism, and Chapter V (The Three Kingdoms and the Six Dynasties) sex and family life.

Then, Chapter VI (Sui Dynasty) is mainly devoted to the Handbooks of Sex, Chapter VII (T'ang Dynasty) deals especially with high-class prostitution, sexual relations in the Palace, and medical and erotic literature, while Chapter VIII (Five Dynasties and Sung Period) treats of the custom of footbinding, high- and low-class prostitution, and the influence of Neo-Confucianism on sexual relations.

Finally, Chapter IX (Yüan Dynasty) describes sex relations under the Mongol occupation, with special reference to Lamaism, and Chapter X (Ming Dynasty) centers round sex in art and letters.

Readers who desire to orientate themselves on one particular subject will find references to the pertinent passages in the General Index.

The present book is a mere outline, a first attempt at surveying the material available, and at arranging it in historical sequence, its aim being to provide the general information needed by research workers who can not consult the original Chinese sources. I hope that they will find in it what they need, or ascertain at least where they can find it. It was with the latter point in mind that I added footnotes referring to Western literature. In a work like the present, covering in a few hundred pages a period of three thousand years, references to sinological publications could of course be added to literally every single statement made. But I thought that these would be of little use to the general reader, while Sinologues themselves will know where to look for pertinent bibliographical data. Therefore I have limited references to Western literature to those books and essays that seemed most useful for the general reader's further orientation.

However, since this is the first book on the subject, and since I hope that sinological colleagues will pursue further various problems here only touched upon, I had to substantiate more important points by precise references to the Chinese sources. Therefore some pages bristle with Chinese names, book-titles, terms and dates. It is hoped that the general reader will be so kind as to excuse this feature. At the same time my sinological colleagues are requested to make allowance for the fact that I was compelled to formulate some historical statements more categorically than I would have done had more space been available, and often had to condense complicated problems into a single line.

It will be noticed that folkloristic material has been rarely quoted in the present book. As elsewhere, so also in China folklore is a rich source for sexual research, and scholars as M. Granet, W. Eberhard and others have done brilliant work on it. But the field is so enormous that despite their efforts at breaking it, the time when it can be used with confidence for historical and comparative purposes has not yet come. Until more material has been gathered and sifted, incidental facts might too easily be mistaken as indicating a general tendency. Chinese literature is so extensive, in bulk, time and geographical coverage, that if we were to draw conclusions from isolated facts we could then easily prove that practically every phenomenon or custom known to comparative anthropology existed at one time or another in China. In the present study only such data are used as belong definitely to the Chinese culture-sphere, and which are proved by numerous references in older and later literature to have been generally recognized by the Chinese themselves as typical of their thought and habits. This implies that I left out of consideration also the sexual habits of the non-sinified aborigines (Mo-so, Miao, Lo-lo etc.), and of those Chinese professing one of the non-sinified foreign creeds (e.g. the Chinese Moslems).

For the same reason I refrained from quoting at length Marco Polo's remarks on sexual life during the Yüan dynasty. The great Venetian traveller knew Mongol and Turkish but no Chinese, and identified himself completely with the Mongol overlords. Chinese life he saw only from the outside; except for his factual remarks on the brothel-system which tally with Chinese sources, it seems that his observations on sexual habits in China concern chiefly foreign communities there, while we must also reckon with the possibility of arbitrary embellishments added by Rustichello and other editors and translators.¹

¹ Next to the standard-edition of Marco Polo's travels by Moule and Pelliot (cf. page 253 below), I mention the very readable new English version by R. E. Latham, "The Travels of Marco Polo", Penguin Classics, London 1958. Pp. 143-144 describe sexual habits in the Tibetan border region, pp. 146-47 a kind of sexual hospitality among the aborigines of Szuchuan, 152-153 the couvade as practised by the aborigines in Yunnan, p. 168 a test of virginity that would seem to apply to the Moslim community (cf. the data on this subject collected by Iwai

As was explained above, I came upon the subject of ancient Chinese sexual life by accident, and my qualifications for writing about it are limited to those of an Orientalist with a general interest in anthropology. While conducting this investigation I often felt my lack of special sexological knowledge as a handicap. It was the realization of this gap in my qualifications that made me adopt the policy of letting in the main the Chinese texts speak for themselves, drawing only such conclusions as seemed justified by common sense reasoning, or by my own general impressions gathered during more than thirty years of rather varied Chinese reading. It is hoped that medical and sexological readers will find in the translated texts sufficient primary material for formulating their own conclusions. It may be added that all translations of both prose and poetry contained in the present volume are my own, even in those cases where the footnotes mention already existing Western translations of such Chinese texts.

My lack of medical knowledge prompted me also to refrain from discussing purely medical subjects such as obstetrics, pharmacology etc., although these also have a bearing on sexual life. Those interested may refer to the existing Western works on Chinese medicine.¹ I made an exception only for venereal disease, because its introduction into China influenced Chinese sexual habits.

It is my agreeable duty to express my gratitude to the British Museum in London, to the Freer Gallery of Art and the Library of Congress in Washington D.C., to the Musée Guimet in Paris, and to the National Museum of Ethnography in Leyden. As on former occasions, those institutions again kindly supplied me with illustrative and textual material from their splendid collections.

Kuala Lumpur, summer 1960

R. H. VAN GULIK

Hirasato in his article quoted in the footnote on p. 12 below). P. 100 correctly describes the brothel-system in the capital, p. 198 nude bathing in the S. Sung Palace in "Kinsai" (Hangchow), and p. 187 quotes foreign opinion on the courtesans of that city: "These ladies are highly proficient and accomplished in the use of endearments and caresses, with words suited and adapted to every sort of person, so that foreigners who have once enjoyed them remain utterly beside themselves and so captivated by their sweetness and charm that, when they return home, they say they have been in 'Kinsai', that is to say in the city of Heaven, and can scarcely wait for the time when they may go back there".

¹ E.g. K. Wong and L. Wu, "History of Chinese Medicine" (2nd edition 1936), and J. P. Kleiweg de Zwaan, "Völkerrundliches und Geschichtliches über die Heilkunde der Chinesen und Japaner" (Haarlem 1917). Data on Chinese contraceptives and abortifacients (with references to old Chinese medical literature) are found in Norman E. Himes's book "Medical History of Contraception", London 1936, pp. 108-113. The entire Chinese pharmacopoeia has been treated by Dr. B. E. Read in a series of brilliant books and essays.

ABBREVIATIONS

- BD "A Chinese Biographical Dictionary", by H. A. Giles, London & Shanghai 1898; Peking reprint 1939. Although containing a number of mistakes, for the pre-Ch'ing period still the best biographical reference-book available in English.
- CC "Tch'ouen Ts'iou et Tso Tchouan", (Chinese text and French translation), by S. Couvreur, 3 vols., Paris 1951.
- CPM "The Golden Lotus", a translation, from the Chinese original, of the novel Chin P'ing Mei, by Clement Edgerton. Four volumes, George Routledge & Sons, London 1939.
- CSK *Ch'üan-shang-ku-san-tai-ch'in-han-kuo-liu-ch'ao-wên*, the large anthology of pre-T'ang prose compiled by Yen K'o-chün (1762-1843); lithographed edition of 1930.
- ECP "Erotic Colour Prints of the Ming Period, with an Essay on Chinese Sex Life from the Han to the Ch'ing Dynasty, B.C. 206-A.D. 1644," by R. H. van Gulik. Vol. I English text, vol. II Chinese text, vol. III reprint of the Hua-ying-chinchên album. Tōkyō 1951.
- Folio The pages and columns of the Chinese texts in vol. II of ECP.
- HYTS *Hsiang-yen-ts'ung-shu* "Collected Writings on Fragrant Elegance". A comprehensive collection of reprints of old and later books, treatises and essays relating to women; their careers, interests, artistic and literary activities, dress and personal adornment, sexual relations etc. Includes many writings that were proscribed during the Ch'ing dynasty. Published in the years 1909-1911 when censorship became lax, by the Kuo-hsüeh-fu-lun-shê in Shanghai, in 20 sections, totalling 80 volumes. Printed with movable type, but comparatively few mistakes.
- LAC "Lokalkulturen im alten China", by W. Eberhard, vol. I (Supplement of Vol. XXXVII of the T'oung Pao), Leyden 1942.
- SCC "Science and Civilization in China", by Joseph Needham. Vol. I "Introductory Orientation, Cambridge, University Press, 1954; vol. II "History of Scientific Thought", *ibid.* 1956; vol. III "Mathematics and the Sciences of the Heavens and the Earth", *ibid.* 1959. The complete series will comprise seven volumes.
- SF *Shuo-fu*, the comprehensive collection of reprints compiled by T'ao

Tsung-i'ca. 1360. The Ming blockprint is referred to, not the movable type reprint of 1927.

SPTK *Szû-pu-ts'ung-k'an*, the large collection of photo-lithographic reprints of old literature, published by the Commercial Press, Shanghai 1920-1922.

TPL "Chinese Prose Literature of the T'ang Period", by E. D. Edwards, Vol. I Miscellaneous Literature, Probsthain's Oriental Series, London 1937; vol. II Fiction, *ibid.* 1938.

FIRST PART

THE FEUDAL KINGDOM

Yin and Chou Periods, ca. 1500–222 B.C.

The fundamental Chinese ideas on sex and society

FIRST PART

THE FEUDAL KINGDOM

Yen and Chun Period, ca. 1500-1200 B.C.

The Fundamental Chinese ideas on man and society

CHAPTER ONE

EARLY PERIOD AND FORMER CHOU DYNASTY CA. 1500-771 B.C.

It is always useful to try to begin at the beginning, even if—as is the case with the origin of Chinese culture—the beginning is largely shrouded in mystery.

Later Chinese tradition avers that in the third millennium B.C. there existed in the north a Chinese kingdom called Hsia, its capital is said to have been located in the southern part of present-day Shansi Province. Ca. 1600 B.C. it was overthrown and succeeded by a dynasty which called itself Yin, or also Shang. The Yin dynasty moved its capital to An-yang, in the north of Honan Province, and lasted till ca. 1100 B.C., when it was replaced by the Chou dynasty.

Whereas about the Hsia we have only a much later Chinese tradition, about the Yin dynasty archeological finds have supplied more reliable though limited information. The Yin kingdom was a well-organized feudal state with a highly developed bronze culture. Its people possessed great skill in casting bronze and sculpting stone, they used a script that became the basis of all later Chinese writing, being a combination of pictographs, ideographs and phonetic signs. Ancestor worship and divination played a predominant role in their daily life.

It was thanks to their high regard for divination that at least some aspects of life and thought of the Yin people have become reliably known. One of their methods for consulting the oracle was to heat the shoulderblade of a deer or the carapace and sternum of a tortoise, then to read the answer to their question by interpreting the cracks produced in the bone. Question and answer were engraved on the bone used, which was subsequently buried underground. In recent years enormous numbers of such inscribed oracle bones were excavated, and it is these together with Yin sacrificial bronzes and other implements that enable us to check and supplement the data about this dynasty preserved in later Chinese literature.

The comparative study of archeological finds and later literary data started only in the beginning of this century but it has already produced some striking results. It has proved, for instance, that later Chinese traditional lists

of the kings of the Yin dynasty which modern historians used to view with considerable scepticism, are in the main correct. However, as regards Yin religion and society these studies are yet in their initial stage. Although the general purport of most bone inscriptions is now understood, the identification of many graphs and their exact connotations are still largely a matter of conjecture. The chief difficulty is that both the bone inscriptions and those found on sacrificial bronzes give by their very nature only a one-sided picture of Yin culture. We find ourselves in approximately the same position as a man who in say the year 5000 would try to reconstruct our present Western civilization while having at his disposal only a collection of tombstones from a number of cemeteries now scattered over Europe.

Moreover, the material regarding the Yin dynasty dating from the Chou kingdom that succeeded it in ca. 1100 B.C. is but of limited use. The Chou rulers originated from what then was the western part of China, they were stronger than the Yin people in warlike achievements, but inferior to them in the field of culture. While taking over the culture of the defeated dynasty, including its script, they had to adapt it to their own way of life and thinking, and doubtless gave a different interpretation to many Yin concepts. It is therefore not enough to identify a certain Yin graph with a Chou character, for it is by no means certain that the Yin people used that character in quite the same sense. Moreover one has to remember that Chou tradition itself has been transmitted to us only in a much modified version, drawn up towards the beginning of our era. These difficulties are met with not only in the script, but also in the interpretation of the ornamental motifs that decorate the Yin sacrificial vessels and other remains.

Both in east and west competent scholars are working on these data, and our knowledge is steadily advancing.¹ As yet, however, we have not yet arrived

¹ Books of a general character on China's oldest history are J. G. Anderson, "Children of the Yellow Earth", London 1934, and H. G. Creel "The Birth of China", 2nd ed. London 1958. The many new discoveries made after the publication of these two books are as yet available only in specialized sinological publications.

Rather technical but still of interest to the non-sinological reader are H. Maspero, "La Chine Antique", Paris 1927, reprinted 1958, and M. Granet, "La Civilisation Chinoise", Paris 1929; English edition entitled "Chinese Civilization" publ. London 1930. The latter treats especially sociological aspects. It must be noted, however, that many subjects connected with ancient Chinese history and society are still under discussion, and that hence the books mentioned contain a number of debatable points.

A good survey of the entire history of China is L. Carrington Goodrich, "A Short History of the Chinese People", revised edition London 1957, which stresses the development also of material culture. Also K. S. Latourette, "The Chinese, their history and culture", New York 1946, new edition New York 1958; a brief but unbiassed account with extensive bibliographical notes.

at a stage where we can form an opinion on the sociology and sex life of the Yin people.

The graph at present pronounced *ch'ü* and meaning "a man taking a wife" may serve to illustrate the position. The Yin graph as found engraved on oracle bones (Figure 1a) consists of two parts, a picture of a woman on the left (cf. Figure 2d), and on the right a graph representing the verb "to take". This verb, also pronounced *ch'ü*, consists of the picture of a hand gripping an ear. One is thus tempted to interpret the Yin graph as indicating that a man married a woman by taking her by the ear—with all the sociological implications of such a masterful procedure. However, the verb "to take" may as well have been used in this case in its phonetic sense only, which confines the meaning of the graph to "the act of marrying a woman, pronounced *ch'ü*". On Figure 1 later forms of this same character are added to show the development of Chinese writing; b gives the form used throughout the Chou dynasty till the early centuries of our era, c the 14th-century block-print form based on the style created by a more perfected writing brush that has remained in use ever since.¹

But however limited and uncertain our knowledge of the Yin people may be, it suffices to shed some light on at least one aspect of ancient Chinese sex life. For some Yin data fit in so well with certain traits observed in later times that one may consider them as sufficient proof that although Chou and later Chinese society was manifestly patriarchal, in Yin and/or earlier times the feminine element predominated.

In the first place, the Yin graph for "woman" *nü* consists of a picture of a kneeling human figure the most distinctive feature of which is a pair of disproportionally large breasts (cf. Figure 1d); that it is breasts and not, for instance, hands akimbo in wide sleeves, is proved i.a. by the graph for "mother" *mu*, which has the nipples added (Figure 1e). The graph for "man" *nan*, on the other hand, consists of a square picture of a piece of cultivated land, and another sign indicating "to work" (see Figure 1h; i is a variant). This suggests that whereas the Yin people considered woman chiefly as the nourishing mother, man was viewed primarily in his function of tiller of the land and provider of the family—a distinction which points in matriarchal direction.

Figure 1 shows, for the sake of completeness, in f and g the later forms of the character "woman", and in j and k those of the character "man".

Second, from the earliest times known till the present day, the red colour has stood in China for creative power, sexual potency, life, light and happiness.

¹ Readers who want to orientate themselves regarding the Chinese script, its history and its problems are referred to B. Karlgren, "Sound and Symbol in Chinese", Stockholm 1930.

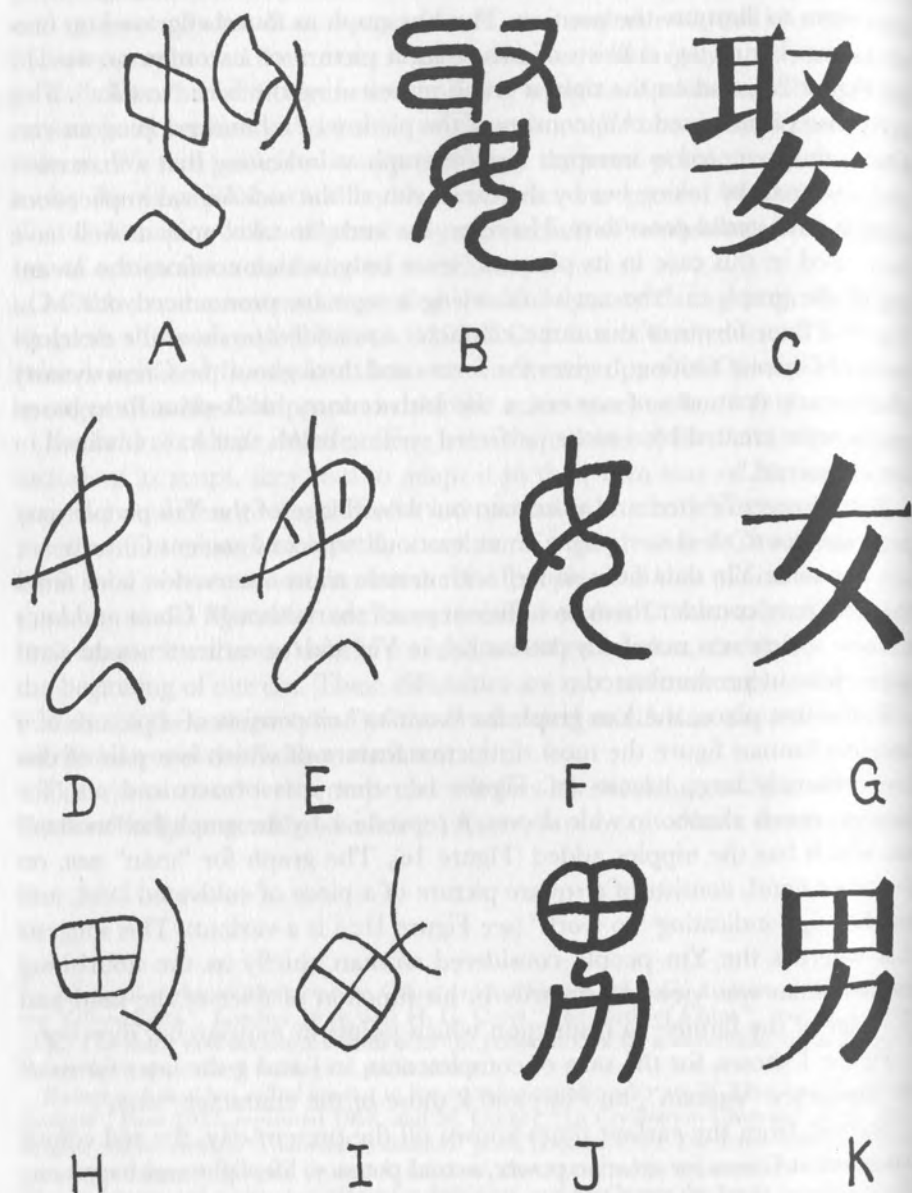


Figure 1

I mention for instance the Yin and Chou custom of painting burial gifts red in order to preserve them from decay;¹ and the later custom of giving that colour to gifts and decorations on auspicious occasions, and to practically everything connected with the marriage ceremony—itsself referred to as *hung-shih*, the “Red Affair”. An old term for red, in this life-giving sense, is *ch’ih*, the Yin graph of which depicts a blazing fire. This term *ch’ih* is also applied to the reddish colour of a new-born child, and at the same time means “naked”. The white colour, on the contrary, has always stood for negative influences, weak sexual potency, death and mourning; burial ceremonies are referred to *po-shih*, the “White Affair”. Now the Yin graph for “white”, *po*, is related to that of *t’u* “earth”, and a modern scholar is doubtless right when he recognizes in this graph a phallus.² Throughout later Chinese alchemistic and erotic literature man is called *white* and woman *red*, *nan-po nü-ch’ih* (cf. page 82), and erotic pictures often depict their naked bodies as having respectively these colours. This colour-association suggests that in archaic times woman was considered as sexually superior to man.

In the third place I mention the character for “surname”, *hsing*. From the second half of the Chou period onward this character consists of two elements, the radical for “woman” on the left, and a graph meaning “to be born” on the right. This character is often quoted as proof that ancient Chinese society was matriarchal, since it apparently indicates that children were named after their mother. Unfortunately this graph has to the best of my knowledge not yet been found on Yin inscribed bones, and all the old Chou graphs known to me write it with the radical *jên* “human being”, instead of “woman”. However, even if we leave it open whether this graph *hsing* written with the “woman” radical really dates from the Yin period, it yet cannot be gainsaid that the mere fact that for more than two thousand years it has been employed

¹ It seems, however, that during the Han period people believed that white had been the preferred colour of the Yin dynasty, and red that of the Chou rulers. Cf. *Li-chi*, chapter T’an-kung, I, 13: “The Yin people venerated white . . . The Chou people venerated red” (Yin-jên shang po, Chou-jên shang ch’ih). The Han philosopher Wang Ch’ung (27–97 A.D.) narrates in his *Lun-hêng* (SPTK ed. vol. 6, ch. 19 p. 7a) the legend that T’ai-kung (Chiang Tzû-ya, the counsellor of King Wên of the Chou dynasty) during the struggle with the Yin people evolved the following stratagem: he fed a young boy with cinnabar till his body had grown big and red all over, and then told him to proclaim in the street that the Yin dynasty would perish. That frightened the Yin people, for it suggested that the “red” Chou, embodying strength and light, were about to defeat the “white” Yin people, weak and waning. But it may well be that this motif was created by the Han Confucianists, in order to glorify the early Chou rulers who were their chosen models; cf. the discussions at the beginning of Chapter III below.

² Cf. B. Karlgren, “Some Fecundity Symbols in Ancient China”, in *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, no. 2, Stockholm 1930; only part of the theories developed there have found general acceptance.

unchanged in its sense of "surname" indicates that in the Chinese subconscious there are lingering strong matriarchal memories.

Fourth, the old dynastic legends indicate that there was a time when the succession of kings (or perhaps clan-leaders) went from grandfather to grandchild, thus skipping one generation in the agnatic line. Sociologists are probably right when they interpret this tradition as a remnant of a transition stage from the matrilinear to the patrilinear principle.

Finally, old myths and legends credit woman with special magical power. And still more significantly, the Chinese handbooks of sex—recorded as of the beginning of our era but doubtless in existence already long before that date—represent woman as the guardian of the arcana of sex and repository of all sexual knowledge. All texts on sexual relations introduce a woman as the great initiator, and man as the ignorant pupil.¹

As a matter of course the strictly patriarchal system of the Chou and subsequent dynasties reversed the position. Especially the Confucianist school, attuned as it was to the practical needs of a society built on a sound family system, extols man as the undisputed leader and head of the family, as strong and active, symbol of light and far superior to woman, who is weak and passive, symbol of darkness. Yet all those centuries of Confucianist formation of the conscious mind could not succeed in eliminating the mother image from the Chinese subconscious. Throughout the history of Chinese thought and religion one finds a persistent counter-current, later consciously canalized in Taoism, that praises negative as superior to positive, inactivity above activity. As we shall see below, throughout the ages Chinese speculations on sex departed from the idea that woman is the Great Mother, nourishing not only her offspring, but also her mate who during the sexual act feeds and strengthens his limited life-force by tapping her inexhaustible supply. Finally, the mother-image pervades later Taoism, both in its esoteric aspect of "the beginning of all things", and in its most tangible, physical aspect. Abstruse terms found in mystical Taoist literature such as "the deep vale" and the "mysterious gate", in sexological and magical Taoist texts just mean "uterus" and "vulva".

All such terms would seem to derive originally from the conception of woman as the earth-womb. As we shall see further on, mists and clouds were supposed to contain a large amount of cosmic vital essence, hence the Chinese custom of ascending high places in order to strengthen themselves by absorbing

¹ I hesitate to include in this argument a remark found in some Chinese sources, i.e. the works of the Legalist philosopher Shang-chün, that in high antiquity children knew only their mothers and not their fathers (J. J. L. Duyvendak, "The Book of Lord Shang", *Probsthain's Oriental Series* vol. XVII, London 1928, page 225). This feature seems to belong to the artificial picture of archaic times drawn by later Chinese writers, rather than to actual matriarchal memories.

that essence. However, also the earth was thought to harbour cosmic vital essence and human beings could partake of that if they entered the earth deep and long enough. M. Granet has pointed out the significant fact that the Chou rulers would enter underground rooms or caves for celebrating important events or executing plans that affected their leading position—including political assassination—and there assembled their followers for drinking bouts and sexual orgies in order to assert their prestige.¹ Further, not only human beings but also animals that live underground or in holes and caves were credited on that ground with a large amount of vital essence; the long life and supernatural properties ascribed to foxes, badgers, tortoises, bears etc. must—at least in part—be explained by the belief that their habitat brought them in constant and close contact with the cosmic forces stored in the earth. Later Taoist sources ascribe the long life of the tortoise to its “embryo-breathing”, that is to breathe underground in the same manner as the embryo breathes in its mother’s womb. These beliefs, vague as they are, yet justify the conclusion that the association woman-womb-earth-creative power was older than that of man-phallus-heaven-creative power. Perhaps the former association dates back as far as the time when people had not yet recognized that the coitus is the unique cause of the woman’s conceiving.

It is on the basis of the above considerations that I conclude that in archaic China society was organized on some sort of matriarchal pattern.

This point is raised here because on the pages of the present publication lingering matriarchal memories will often be referred to in the description of Chinese sex life in later periods.

Returning now to the Chou dynasty, which ruled China from ca. 1100 till 221 B.C., we find there a feudal, patriarchal state. This is the first period of Chinese history regarding which sufficient data are available for obtaining a general idea of social conditions, especially concerning its second half, from ca. 700 till 221 B.C. We shall now first discuss the earlier half of this period.

The Chou kingdom was originally a feudal state under the suzerainty of a hereditary priest-king, called *wang*, also *t’ien-tzû* “Son of Heaven”. These kings derived their origin from legendary “founding saints”. The Chou dynastic legend says that the last ruler of the preceding Yin dynasty, described as a profligate tyrant, had imprisoned Duke Wên of Chou, who is described as a saint. After he had been ransomed, Wên’s successor Wu declared war on the king of Yin, defeated him and founded the Chou dynasty.

Just like most other rulers who established themselves by killing their predecessor, also those of Chou felt the need to justify their overthrowing

¹ Cf. R. A. Stein, “Présentation de l’oeuvre posthume de Marcel Granet *Le Roi Boit*”, *Année Sociologique*, Paris 1952, pp. 64–65.

the Yin by quoting historical precedent. Thus they embellished current myths about ancient culture-heroes and presented these re-edited myths as history, stating i.a. that in former times the Yin rulers themselves had deposed the last Hsia King because Heaven did not longer authorize his misrule; thus the Chou Kings stressed that their replacing the Yin dynasty was an exact parallel to the Yin replacing the Hsia. Some modern scholars think the parallel too exact to be true, and maintain that the Hsia dynasty never existed but was from beginning to end a fabrication of the Chou people. It is a fact that till now no references to a Hsia kingdom have been found on the Yin oracle bones. But such negative evidence can be explained in various other ways, and is not convincing.

However this may be, during the Chou dynasty there was recorded a history not only of an old Hsia kingdom, but also of several mythical reigns allegedly having preceded it. The story begins with a creation myth, then comes a succession of Heavenly Emperors who lived thousands of years. Thereafter follow three Emperors, Fu Hsi who taught mankind elementary writing and the institution of marriage, Shên Nung who taught the tilling of the soil, and Huang-ti, the "Yellow Emperor", who taught man the various skills. The civilizing work of the Yellow Emperor was continued by his successors, Yao and Shun. Shun chose as his successor the Great Yü, who saved mankind from the Flood, and founded the Hsia Dynasty. These Emperors are described as Saints who ruled in a Golden Age, and have been held up ever after as the ideal that man of a later, depraved world should strive to reach again. Since such beliefs are a trait most ancient cultures have in common, it may be assumed that also the Yin people believed in an *aetas aurea* of bygone times, and that the Chou kings took over this idea and adapted it to their own political purpose. Special attention may be called here to the Saintly Emperors Huang-ti, Yao and Shun, for we shall meet their names repeatedly on the pages of the present publication.

The Chou kingdom occupied but a small portion of what is now called China, it comprised roughly the modern provinces of Hopei, Shansi, Shantung, and the northern part of Honan; its central part was the section on both sides of the bend in the Yellow River. In the beginning this was a compact state, all worldly and spiritual power was concentrated in the person of the priest-king, who granted family names and territory to the feudal lords. These lords were chosen from among collateral branches of the royal house, from loyal supporters of the Chou cause, or from old local families. Beyond the frontiers lived the "barbarians", with whom the Chou King and his lords conducted intermittent warfare.

The economic basis of the Chou kingdom was agriculture, centering round

the cultivation of millet, wheat and other cereals. Sericulture occupied also an important place. Iron became known only towards the end of this period, but the Chou people just like those of the preceding Yin dynasty had great skill in casting bronze. Domestic animals included pig, water buffalo, sheep, fowl, dogs and horses. The latter were used as draught animals, especially for drawing the war chariots which were the backbone of the Chou armies.

As regards Chou society, there was a clear distinction between on the one hand the lords who administered their allotted territories on behalf of the king and fought for him, and on the other the common people who tilled the land for those lords. The members of the ruling class had permanent abodes, fortified with walls of pounded earth. In those mansions lived the feudal lord with his principal wife, secondary wives and concubines, and with his male retinue and their families. The common people lived during spring and summer in temporary sheds and huts on the land they were cultivating, to move with the coming of winter to semi-permanent dwellings clustering round the mansions of their lords.

High and low sat on the floor, covered with reed mats and furs, and using low stands and tables for eating and drinking. They drank wine produced from millet by fermentation. High tables and chairs would come into use only about 1500 years later. Men and women alike wore an undershirt that seemed to have resembled a poncho, and thereover an upper garment of two pieces, viz. a long-sleeved loose jacket and a long, wide skirt, both provided with embroidered borders. The jacket was closed in front by putting the right-hand lapel over the left,¹ then fastening it by winding a long piece of cloth round the waist. The men also wore leggings, especially with ceremonial dress, and on their heads caps which were kept on both inside and outside the house. Married women did their hair up with needles and hairbands. Real trousers with seats came into use only in the second half of this period.

The common people had no surnames, they could not possess land and had no acknowledged rights. Yet their lot was apparently not worse than that of the commoners of our western feudal times, and in many respects probably even better. Their masters largely depended on them for their own position and welfare. The arable land had to be cultivated and protected against floods and other disasters of nature, hence labour was in great demand. Moreover, the lord needed his commoners as foot-soldiers in battle. Thus the people could

¹ This custom was considered by the Chinese as one of the features that distinguished them from the "barbarians"; cf. Eberhard in LAC p. 229. This view has persisted till today, both in China and Japan. When in the 19th century there arose in China and Japan a strong nationalistic, anti-western current, the "buttoning their coats left over right" was continually referred to as one of the signs of western inferiority.

react to abuse of power by migrating to another fief; since there was much jealousy and strife among the lords, migrating people were sure to be welcomed. The lords collected taxes and administered some elementary justice, but interfered as little as possible in the daily life of the people. The *ius primae noctis* was completely unknown in China.¹

Although rulers and ruled lived lives apart, their religious beliefs were fundamentally the same. They viewed man as but one aspect of animated nature. Like many other ancient peoples, the Chinese drew the parallel between the alternation of night and day and the sequence of the seasons, and the life cycle of man. But peculiarly Chinese was the belief in a mysterious life force, *ch'i*, which pervades the universe and all it contains in a continuous circular course of waning and waxing, later to be defined as the eternal mutual interaction of dual cosmic forces, the positive (*yang*) and the negative (*yin*). It was believed that this life force followed a definite path that represented the supreme order of nature, later called *tao*. Those who adapted their life and thought to this order would live long and happily, those who deviated from it exposed themselves to grief and untimely death. Those who lived in consonance with the natural order collected thereby a great amount of *ch'i*, which increased their *tê*, "virtue"—to be understood in its original sense of magical power, *mana*. This *tê* was not the exclusive possession of man, also birds and beasts, plants, trees and stones were deemed to have it. The stork and tortoise, for instance, were said to possess a large amount of it because they lived so long; the pine tree and the *chih* fungus were supposed to be repositories of it because they do not wither, and jade was considered to be particularly rich in it.

In this period woman was credited with a particularly strong *tê*. In Han and post-Han texts the expression *nü-tê* simply means "woman's virtuousness", but in two older places this expression is explained as "the bewitching power of woman". The first occurs in a historical work of the Han period which quotes someone as criticizing a prince who is deeply in love, for his "cherishing woman's *tê*" (*huai nü-tê*, in Szü-ma Ch'ien's *Shih-chi*, ch. 39, regarding Ch'ung-êrh, prince of Chin). The context proves that here *tê* means woman's power to bind a man to her, not so much by her beauty as by her feminine magic

¹ There are no indications that the Chinese ever shared the belief of so many other races that the moment of defloration was fraught with magical dangers. Chinese travellers of ca. 1300 were astonished when they found in Cambodia the custom that every maiden had to be deflowered by a Buddhist priest prior to her marriage, and when they observed this or similar customs with their Mohammedan countrymen. The pertaining data have been assembled and discussed by Iwai Hirosato in his article "The Buddhist Priest and the Ceremony of Attaining Womanhood during the Yüan Dynasty", in *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Tōyō Bunko*, no. 7, Tōkyō 1935.

power over man. And *nü-tê* is used in exactly the same sense in the well-known saying quoted in the *Tso-chuan* (see p. 26 note 1): "The *tê* of a girl is without limits, the resentment of a married woman is without end" (CC I, page 362, under the year 635 B.C.: *nü-tê wu-ch'i, fu-yüan wu-chung*). Probably these two quotations supply the background to another pronouncement recorded in the *Tso-chuan* which says: "Woman is a sinister creature, capable of perverting man's heart" (CC III, page 438, under the year 531 B.C.).

For living in consonance with the natural order, the members of the ruling class could let themselves be guided by the Rites, *li*, and the Ceremonial, *i*, established rules for the conduct of all major and minor occasions in public and private life. These rules embodied the sacred social order instituted in accordance with the cosmic order by Heaven, *t'ien*, an impersonal, supreme regulating power. In cases of doubt how to act, or when about to engage upon some important enterprise, one consulted the oracle. Next to the scapulimancy described above, another popular method of divination was to manipulate a bundle of dried stalks of the milfoil. One could also learn the future and Heaven's will by consulting a medium; the medium would get into a trance and then utter oracular words. Both male (*hsi*) and female mediums (*wu*) are mentioned, but there are indications that the function properly and originally belonged to woman.¹

The ruling class believed itself to possess a great amount of *tê*, inherited from their ancestors and passed on to their own offspring. This *tê* formed the link between the ancestors and their descendants, it connected the dead with the living. The living had to sacrifice regularly to the ancestors, for if these sacrifices were broken off the *tê* of the ancestors would diminish and they would become either malevolent ghosts or sink into limbo, with disastrous results for their living offspring. Hence it was every man's sacred duty to his ancestors and also to himself to produce male children who would continue the sacrifices in the ancestral hall. This consideration constituted the most powerful motive for the polygamic family system that has prevailed in China till recent years; for if one wife failed to bear male children, one had to have others who would give birth to one or more sons. The ancestors on their side took part in the life of the living, they kept a benevolent watch over them, and the living had to keep them informed of all their doings. Ancestor cult was the cornerstone of Chinese religious life, and has remained so until quite recently.

¹ The subject of the *wu* is thoroughly treated by J. Needham in vol. II of his "Science and Civilization in China" (Cambridge University Press 1956), pp. 132 sq. For shamanism in general see the excellent study by Mircea Eliade, "Le Chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase," Paris 1951; China is dealt with on pp. 393-404, where the magical powers of woman are also referred to.

Man was supposed to have two souls, called respectively *p'ò* and *hun*. The *p'ò*, usually translated as "animal soul", comes into existence at the moment of conception, after death it stays with the corpse until it has decayed. The *hun*, the "spirit soul", enters the child when it leaves the womb, after death it rises to heaven, and as an ancestral spirit it is fed by the sacrifices of the descendants on earth.

In order to conserve the *p'ò* as long as possible, great care was taken to preserve the dead body from decay. It was accompanied by burial gifts credited with much *tê*, such as jade, or cowry shells; since the latter resembled the vulva they suggested fertility and creative force. Originally also the deceased's women and slaves were buried alive with him, or killed before entering the tomb; thereafter they were buried in effigy only. But swords, armour, articles of personal adornment, horses and chariots continued to be buried as they were, the idea being that they would continue to serve the spirit. In later ages one burned paper-models of the dead man's house, garments etc. at the burial, which is a remnant of the ancient Chou custom.

Since the common people had no family names and hence no ancestor cult they possessed but a negligible quantity of *tê*. Yet, since their mode of life brought them in constant and close contact with the forces of nature, it was all the more important for them not to offend against the natural order. Whereas their lords were aided therein by Rites and Ceremonial, the common people depended for their guidance on the Customs, *su*, which found their expression i.a. in seasonal feasts and community celebrations. And although they could not perform the sacrifice to the ancestors or take active part in the other great cults of the nobility, rural cults enabled them to do homage to and propitiate the spirits of the soil, the crops, wind, water, mountains and rivers.

This is the general background setting where we now shall sketch in briefly what we know of sex life and society during the early part of the Chou dynasty.

In these early times the principle of the separation of the sexes was not applied as strictly as later, after the Confucian morale had been established as the standard of conduct. In the royal palace and in the mansions of the nobles the women lived in separate quarters of their own and took their meals apart, but especially married women enjoyed a considerable degree of freedom. During day time they went about the mansion freely and discussed household matters with the steward and the male servants. They also took part in some sacrifices and attended festival occasions in the family circle, but at tables apart and separated from the men by a screen. But they were excluded from most of the men's amusements such as drinking bouts, archery contests and hunting. Least freedom was enjoyed by unmarried girls; virginity being a

sine qua non for being accepted in marriage as a principal wife,* they were kept under close guard in the women's quarters. The daughters of the common people, on the contrary, could freely associate with men. As will be seen below, those young men and women took part in community festivals where they danced and sang together.

In the patriarchal family system the father was the undisputed head, his wife, children and servants owed him unquestioning obedience. The family was conceived as a state in miniature, where the father occupied the place of the king, being the leader in all religious and practical matters. Woman was considered as inferior to man. A song in the *Shih-ching*¹ briefly describes the different customs observed for a new-born boy and girl, symbolizing their future different status in life. This passage occurs in the poem *Szû-kan* and reads:

When a son is born
He is cradled on the bed,
He is clothed in robes,
Given a jade sceptre as toy.
His lusty cries portend his vigour,
He shall wear bright, red knee-caps,
Shall be the lord of a hereditary house.

* The ideal of virginity as a *sine qua non* for being accepted as a wife emerges from certain ritualistic texts, and must be balanced against the historical reality that divorcées and widows remarried freely throughout ancient times. Cf. pp. 30 and 108, below. [PRG]

¹ *Shih-ching*, "Book of Odes", one of the Five Confucianist Classics; the other four are the *I-ching* "Book of Changes" (deals with divination), the *Shu-ching* "Book of Documents" (a miscellaneous collection of historical documents), the *Rituals* (three books on Rites and Ceremonial called *Chou-li* "Rites of the Chou Dynasty", *Li-chi* "Notes on Rites" and *I-li* "Ceremonial"), and the *Ch'un-ch'iu* "Spring and Autumn Chronicle" (a list of historical events). All of these five works are ascribed by old Chinese tradition to the Chou period or earlier, but later research has proved that all but the *Shih-ching* and the *Ch'un-ch'iu* were considerably changed and augmented during the first centuries of our era (see page 56 below).

The Book of Odes, a collection of odes, hymns and folksongs from the feudal states, suffered least from remanipulation; but since it belongs to "oral literature", there are uncounted textual problems. It owes its faithful preservation mainly to the fact that its content lent itself to a secondary, political interpretation, so that it could be quoted for moral and educational purposes and political satire.

S. Couvreur published a French translation entitled "Cheu King" (Ho-kien-fu 1913) which faithfully reproduces the—frequently arbitrary—interpretation of the Neo-Confucianist school of the 12th century A.D. For an attempt to restore the original meaning of a number of pieces, see the excellent scholarly translation by B. Karlgren, "The Book of Odes", Stockholm 1950; the numbers marking my translations refer to this edition. Also the sociological and ethnological interpretation by M. Granet, "Fêtes et Chansons anciennes de la Chine", Paris 1929. A good selection in a literary translation was published by A. Waley, in his "The Book of Songs", latest edition London 1954.

When a daughter is born
 She is cradled on the floor,
 She is clothed in swaddling-bands,
 Given a loom-whorl as toy.
 She shall wear no badges of honour,
 Shall only take care of food and drink,
 And not cause trouble to her parents.

(Book of Odes, no. 189)

However, the general principle that woman was lower than man did by no means imply that every woman was inferior to every man. Especially principal wives were persons of consequence, with great authority within the household.

Until the age of ten boys and girls were allowed to play together. Then their ways parted, the boys entered school, the girls were confined to the women's quarters where they were taught sewing and the other feminine skills. The classical texts say that girls begin to menstruate when they are "two times seven", and that the boy's sperma is completed and emissions begin when he is "two times eight". This change in both boys and girls is indicated by the same term, *t'ien-kuei*, which seems to mean "the term ordained by Heaven". Special terms for menstruation are *yüeh-shih* "monthly affair", *ching-shui* "regular fluid", *yüeh-ching* "monthly rule", *pan* of uncertain origin, *yüeh-k'o* "the monthly guest", and numerous flowery expressions which shall be discussed later. Towards the beginning of our era there was recorded the rule that during the period of menstruation a woman was not allowed to take part in the family rites, and that her forehead was marked with a red spot to indicate her unclean condition; but it is not known whether this custom was in existence already in the early part of the Chou period.

After her first menstruation the girl was considered to have reached the marriageable age, and her hair was done up during a simple domestic ceremony called *chi-chi* "arrived at the hairpins". The boy received his higher education, and when he was twenty he received the cap of manhood, *kuan*. This event was celebrated in the household with great pomp and circumstance. Thereafter he was expected to marry, for he must as soon as possible fulfil his sacred duty to his family and the social order, namely obtain male offspring.

It is worth noting that there are no traces of painful manhood or womanhood initiation rites for either boys or girls, and that circumcision for boys and clitoridectomy for girls were completely unknown.

Man is a microcosmos that functions in exactly the same way as the macrocosmos, and the sexual union of man and wife is a small replica of the mutual interaction of the dual forces of nature. Human marriage is, therefore, funda-

mentally the same as the cosmic marriage of heaven and earth which mate during rain storms. Since times immemorial the Chinese considered the clouds as the earth's ova, which are fertilized by the rain, heaven's sperma. In the human sphere the union of king and queen, the man and woman *par excellence*, epitomizes the balance of the positive and negative elements in the realm and the world. If their union lacks harmony, the effects will be felt throughout the land in draughts, floods and other natural disasters. Therefore the sexual relations of the ruler and his spouse are carefully regulated by rites and ceremonial. We shall describe these first, then proceed to the marriages of the members of the ruling class and of the common people.

Since the king has a maximum of *tê*, he needs a large number of female partners to nourish and perpetuate it through sexual intercourse. The king has one queen (*hou*), three consorts (*fu-jên*), nine wives of the second rank (*pin*), twenty-seven wives of the third rank (*shih-fu*), and eighty-one concubines (*yü-chü*). These figures are fixed according to a hoary number-magic. Odd numbers stand for the positive force of nature, for male and male potency; even for negative, female and female fertility. Three being the first odd number after one, it stands for strong male potency; nine being three times three, stands for its superabundance. Multiplying these two magic figures one obtains 27 and 81.

Special court-ladies, called *nü-shih*, regulated and supervised the sexual relations of the king and his wives. They saw to it that the king cohabitated with them on the correct calendar days and with the frequency established by the Rites for each rank. They kept careful note of the sexual unions with special red writing brushes, called *t'ung-kuan*; hence throughout the later ages descriptions of the sex life of the ruler are designated in Chinese literature as *t'ung-shih* "Records made with the Red Brush".

The general rule was that the women of the lower ranks should be copulated with *before* those of higher rank, and more frequently. With the queen the king cohabitated only once a month. This rule is based on the belief, briefly touched upon already above, that during the sexual union the man's vital force is fed and strengthened by that of the woman, supposed to reside in her vaginal secretions. Thus the king copulated with the queen only after his potency had been increased to its maximum by frequent previous unions with the women of the lower ranks, and when there was consequently the best chance of the queen conceiving a strong and intelligent heir to the throne.¹

¹ Later Chinese commentaries do not recognize this fact. They aver that since the queen symbolizes the moon, and the king the sun, the king must cohabit with her only when there is a full moon, and when there is supposed to be a perfect correspondence between those two cosmic symbols of male and female. The entire theory has been repro-

It was the *nü-shih* who conducted the women to the royal bed-chamber. She gave the women a silver ring to put on her right hand when led there, and she remained to watch the consummation of the union and noted its result. Thereafter she changed the silver ring from the woman's right hand to her left, and entered the day and hour of the union in the records. When afterwards the woman proved to have conceived, the *nü-shih* gave her a golden ring to wear. The *nü-shih* also kept the king informed about the women's state of health and their periods of menstruation.

Only the consorts of the higher ranks were allowed to stay the entire night with the king. The concubines had to leave the bedchamber before dawn. There has been preserved in the Book of Odes an old poem that describes the resentment of the concubines at these unequal rights. It says:

Twinkling, twinkling those small stars
Humbly following Scorpio and Hydra in the east.
Thus modestly we walk through the dark
While night still reigns in the palace.
Women's fates are different indeed!

Twinkling, twinkling those small stars,
Like those in Orion, in the Pleiads.
Modestly we walk through the dark,
Carrying our own quilts and coverlets.
Women's fates are different indeed!

(Book of Odes, no. 21)

The title of this poem, *Hsiao-hsing* "Small Stars", has become a common literary term for "concubine".

Here there may be inserted a description of an ideal beauty, dating from ca. 750 B.C. It occurs in a song of the *Shih-ching* entitled *Shih-jên* and extols the beauty of a famous princess.

Hands soft like rush-down,
Skin smooth like lard.
Neck long and white like a tree-grub,
Teeth like melon seeds

duced in detail by M. Granet in his book "La polygynie sororale et le sororat dans la Chine féodale" (Paris 1920), pp. 39-40. Although lunar symbolism may have contributed to the protocol of the regal coitus in general, there can be no doubt that the primary consideration was the one indicated, viz. that the king must copulate with the queen only when his potency had reached its apex through sexual congress with his other women.

Cicada's head and moth's eyebrows.
Smiling a charming smile,
Her beautiful eyes have the black and white clearly marked.

"Cicada head" refers to the two long tresses hanging on either side of the coiffure. "Moth's eyebrows" point to the gracefully curved antennae of that insect. This line figures throughout the later ages among the stereotyped epithets of a beautiful woman.

Marriages among the members of the ruling class were strictly exogamic. The marrying with a woman of the same surname, be it principal wife, secondary wife or concubine was completely taboo; such "name-incest" was considered to expose the husband, the woman herself and their offspring to dire disasters. Classical literature maintains that no such taboos existed for the common people. This is evidently wrong. Although, as the *locus classicus* has it, "Rites and Ceremonial do not descend to the people below", the common people did have their *su* or customs. Since anthropology teaches us that generally archaic communities have even more elaborate sexual taboos than those of a higher cultural level, it may be safely assumed that also among the ancient Chinese peasantry marriages were subjected to various taboo-restrictions, although these have not been put on record. In later times the family-name taboo applied to all classes alike, and it is still observed to-day.

A member of the ruling class was supposed to marry only once a principal wife.¹ If she died or if he repudiated her, he could not marry a second time, at least not with the ceremonial attending the wedding with a principal wife. Marriages were arranged through the good offices of a go-between. As the Book of Odes says:

How does one make an axe-handle?
Without an axe it can not be done!
How does one marry a wife?
Without a go-between it can not be done!

(Book of Odes, no. 158)

¹ The very complicated subject of the ancient Chinese wedding ceremony is here only cursorily treated, because the voluminous literature about it supplies but meagre data of importance for the study of sexual life. Interested readers are referred to the pertaining chapter of the *I-li* (see p. 15 note 1), English translation by J. Steele ("The I-li or Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial," London 1917), and French translation by S. Couvreur ("Cérémonial", Ho-kien-fu 1916, reprinted Paris 1951), where all the preliminaries and every stage of the ceremony are described in painstaking detail. The subject is narrowly bound up with kinship problems e.g. regarding the man marrying the principal wife together with her sisters or relatives; these aspects are thoroughly treated by

It was the go-between who conducted the preliminary negotiations. Next to finding out whether the omens were favourable to the planned match, he had to ascertain that the bride was indeed of a different clan, that she was indeed a virgin, that the wedding presents were in order, while he had also to investigate the social position and influence of her parents. For the ruling class had an elaborate code of honour, and if one of the parties concerned thought the proposed match objectionable, this might give rise to sanguinary feuds. The girl had as a rule no voice in the selection of her future husband, this was decided by the parents in consultation with the go-between.

When all the preliminaries had been satisfactorily concluded, the groom paid a visit to the bride's parents, carrying a goose; later commentators give various explanations of this goose, but all of those are plainly of a secondary character. He then took the bride home, and the wedding was celebrated during a ceremonial dinner, and consummated that same night. This ceremony was taken to regularize simultaneously the union of the groom with the younger sisters or maids of the bride which she usually brought with her to occupy the places of secondary wives, c.q. concubines of her husband. The following morning the husband introduced his wife to his parents, and presented her to the souls of his ancestors in the ancestral hall of the mansion. After the lapse of three months, this same ceremony of presentation of the wife was repeated, but now in a more solemn manner. It was only after this second ceremony that the wife was definitively established in her position.

Sometimes a bride did not relish the idea of bringing with her the secondary spouses of her future husband. The Book of Odes has a song, entitled *Chiang-yu-szû*, where the girls intended for that purpose whom the bride wanted to leave behind, voice their satisfaction that she has in the end been prevailed upon to admit them into the household. It says:

The Great River divides and joins again.
Our bride went to the groom's house,
But she would not take us.
She would not take us,
But later she had to repent!

The Great River has its islets.
Our bride went to the groom's house,
But she would not be with us.

M. Granet in his book "La Polygynie sororale etc." mentioned in the preceding note, and also in his "Catégories matrimoniales et relations de proximité dans la Chine ancienne", Paris 1939. A good survey is Feng Han-chi, "The Chinese Kinship System", in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. II, 1937.

She would not be with us,
But later she had to make room for us!

The Great River has its tributaries
Our bride went to the groom's house,
But she would not let us go with her.
She would not let us go with her,
But in the end she had to accept us!

(Book of Odes, no. 22)

The image of the Great River with its many tributaries would seem to refer to the husband being entitled to many female companions.

The marriage of members of the ruling class was called *hun*, an enigmatic old term that would seem to mean "twilight ceremony", referring to the fact that the wedding was celebrated and consummated at night time.

Marriages of the common people were called *pên* "encounters". With the advent of spring when the families left their winter shelters and moved to the fields, the rural communities organized spring festivals where the young men and maidens performed dances together and sung catch songs and counting songs, nearly all of which bore relation to fertility cults, and were often of a frankly erotic character. During these festivals each young man selected and courted his girl, and had sexual intercourse with her. These liaisons thus concluded were continued all during summer and autumn, and regularized—presumably by the village elders—before the families moved back to their winter quarters. Probably the main criterium for the regularization was whether or not the girl had become pregnant.

Since the girl could accept or refuse the suitor, or accept him and then change her mind, while the young man had the same freedom, it follows that the girls of the common people had as a rule a much fuller sex life than their sisters of the upper class. The folksongs about courtship, love and marriage preserved in the *Shih-ching* give an excellent idea of rural love life. In form and content surprisingly similar to folk-songs of other lands and times, the songs of the *Shih-ching* express in a striking manner the full emotional gamut of the joys and sorrows of courtship and love. Here there is quoted in the first place a song describing a community festival on the river bank, where young men and girls courted each other and engaged in amorous contests, and thereafter had sexual intercourse. In later erotic literature the peony is often used to refer to a woman's genitalia.

The rivers Chên and Wei,
 See their waters rising!
 Boys and girls
 Carry armfuls of orchids.
 The girls ask: 'Did you look there?'
 The boys answer: 'We are just back,
 But shall we go again?'
 For on the other bank of the Wei,
 There is a lovely field!
 The boys and girls
 There assemble for their sporting,
 And a peony is the gage.

The rivers Chên and Wei,
 See how clear their waters!
 Boys and girls
 Carry baskets filled with flowers.
 The girls ask: 'Did you look there?'
 The boys answer: 'We are just back,
 But shall we go again?'
 For on the other bank of the Wei,
 There is a lovely field'.
 The boys and girls
 There assemble for their sporting,
 And a peony is the gage.

(Book of Odes, no. 95)

Another song describes meetings of young men and women outside the city gates. It is entitled *Ch'u-ch'i-tung-mên* and reads:

Going out through the east city gate
 I see girls numerous as the clouds.
 But although they are numerous as the clouds
 There is none that captivates my heart,
 But she of the white robe and grey headdress,
 She alone gives joy to my heart.

Going out by the gate tower
 I see many girls fair as flowers.
 But although they are fair as flowers

There is none that dwells in my heart
 But she of the white robe and the red headdress,
 She alone pleases my heart.

(Book of Odes, no. 93)

A song apparently describing the satisfaction of a man having married his beloved is the following, entitled *Tung-fang-chih-jih*:

Like the sun in the east
 Is this beautiful girl
 Who is now in my house,
 Who is now in my house
 And follows me inside.

Like the moon in the east
 Is this beautiful girl
 Who is now in my home,
 Who is now in my home
 And follows me outside.

(Book of Odes, no. 99)

The sorrow of a deserted girl is beautifully depicted in the poignant song entitled *Tsun-ta-lu*, "Along the highroad":

Along the highroad
 I took your sleeve—
 Do not hate me,
 Do not break off this old tie!

Along the highroad
 I took your hand—
 Do not be angry with me,
 Do not break off this old love!

(Book of Odes, no. 81)

Finally I quote three songs which are of special sociological interest. The first, a passage from a longer poem entitled *Mêng*, suggests the existence of double morality, also among the peasantry; it says:

Alas, young women,
 Do not take your pleasure with men!
 If a man takes his pleasure
 Little does it matter who talks about it.
 But if a woman takes her pleasure,
 She can not afford to be talked about

(Book of Odes, no. 58)

The second, entitled *Fu-t'ien*, is a warning to girls not to fall in love with young men belonging to a social level above their own, for when the youngsters have reached manhood, the social differences will become more marked and they will marry only a girl of their own class. "Far-away" in the poem means distant in social standing rather than in space. That this warning was voiced seems to indicate that such mixed liaisons did indeed often occur.

Do not till a field too large,
 It will be overgrown with weeds.
 Do not love a far-away man,
 Your toiling heart will be filled with pain.

Do not till a field too large,
 The weeds there will grow tall.
 Do not love a far-away man,
 Your toiling heart will be sad, and grieve.

How handsome, how alluring he is!
 His hair done up in double loops.
 But look, when you see him again,
 Suddenly he is wearing the manhood-cap.

(Book of Odes, no. 102)

The third seems to imply that a suitor's experimental nightly visits to his girl were more or less tolerated. It is very difficult to determine the social milieu of many of the songs in the *Shih-ching*. One obtains the impression, however, that the present one originated not from the peasantry but from the circle of for instance the minor members of a lord's retinue. The song is called *Ch'iang-chung-tzâ*.

I beg you, master Chung,
 Don't climb into our quarters,
 Don't break our willow trees!

It's not that I cherish those,
But I fear my father and mother.
I do love you, Chung,
But what my father and mother say,
I certainly must fear.

I beg you, master Chung,
Don't climb over our wall,
Don't break our mulberry trees!
It's not that I cherish those,
But I fear my cousins.
I do love you, Chung,
But what my cousins say,
I certainly must fear.

I beg you, master Chung,
Don't climb into our garden,
Don't break our *t'an* trees!
It's not that I cherish those,
But I fear the gossip of the people.
I do love you, Chung,
But the people's gossip,
I certainly must fear.

(Book of Odes, no. 76)

After the above brief review of marriage and sexual life during the earlier half of the Chou dynasty, we now take up again the historical thread and turn to the second half of that period.

CHAPTER TWO

LATER CHOU DYNASTY

770-222 B.C.

In the 8th century B.C. important political, social and economic shifts were taking place. The central power of the king of Chou declined, while the feudal lords became ever more independent. Nominally they continued to recognize the king as the head of the realm, but in practice each powerful lord was master of his own territory, established his own court with its ceremonial and personnel, all after the royal pattern, and he kept his own army, loyal to him rather than to the king. It is for this reason that western writers call these later Chou lords "princes", and their domains "states". Thus the later half of the Chou dynasty presents the picture of a decentralized state, where a number of princes are engaged in endless intrigues and armed conflicts in order to expand their individual power at the cost of their neighbours, and at the same time often engaged in warfare with the semi-barbarian states beyond the frontiers. The latter were being gradually "sinified" and took an ever increasing part in inter-state war and politics.

From 722 B.C. onward contemporary literary records provide more dependable material for the social conditions of that age.¹

It appears that next to the nobles and the commoners there was now arising a third, intermediary class which one might designate as that of the "officers" (*shih*). Though of noble descent, possessing a surname, and entitled to go to battle in a war chariot, they did not have land of their own. They served the princes as military officers or as civilian employees, counsellors, scribes, bailiffs and stewards. As learning became increasingly sought after, the *shih* started to concentrate on scholastic studies. It is from this class that came most of the prominent Chinese statesmen and philosophers of that time, including Confucius. They can be considered as the archetype of the

¹ In the following I have made large use of the *Tso-chuan* chronicle attached to the *Ch'un-ch'iu* (see p. 15 note 1), which covers the period 722-450 B.C. Although this text was also revised to a certain extent during later times, the revisions did not materially affect its factual content, and it is on the whole considered as authentic. All references, marked CC, refer to the French translation by S. Couvreur, published in three volumes under the title "Tch'ouen Ts'iou et Tso Tchouan", Ho-kien-fu 1916, reprinted Paris 1951.

"scholar-officials", who have taken the major part in the administration of China from the beginning of our era till the present.

The art of writing was used mainly for recording official and administrative documents, texts for sacrifice and ritual, and for chronicling historical events. The Chou scribes wrote on bamboo or wooden tablets with a brush dipped in ink made of ground charcoal, or of varnish. The tablets forming one book were kept together with leather thongs. *Belles lettres* were largely confined to "Oral literature", they were originally not written down. During banquets and other gatherings poetical and prose recitations were improvised, repeated and repeated again by those attending those meetings to friends and acquaintances, till they had become common property. This fact also accounts for the lack of coherence noticeable in many philosophical works of the Chou period. These were originally not treatises written out by one man, but collections of well-known pronouncements made by the master on various occasions, and noted down by his disciples.

The development of trade and the monetary system brought to the fore another class, that of the merchants. At the same time the progress of the various skills and crafts, together with the rising demand for those products, fortified the position of specialized artisans. Thus there were now, next to the princes, four social classes, viz. officers (*shih*), peasants (*nung*), skilled workers (*kung*) and merchants (*shang*). They are usually enumerated in this order which acknowledges the officers and the peasants as the backbone of the state, and theoretically of higher status than the artisans and merchants.

Merchants and artisans catered to the crave for luxury that reigned at the princely courts. Men and women dressed in a more elaborate way, both sexes now wore under their long outer robes wide trousers, probably introduced from China's western neighbours.¹ It would seem that each season necessitated a changing to robes of a different colour, so as to establish a magic correspondence between man's dress and the condition of nature.² Ladies often wore an embroidered jacket and skirt, their headdress was adorned with beautifully worked hairneedles and silk bands, they wore finger rings and bracelets. For making their toilet they employed round mirrors of polished bronze, held by a tassel attached to a knob on the back (see Figure 4).

The unsettled political situation and the resulting sudden changes in the fortunes of the leading families encouraged a slackening of morals, and there was much sexual license. Princes and high officials kept next to their harems also their own troupes of *nü-yüeh*, trained dancing girls and female musicians,

¹ Cf. Eberhard, LAC, p. 228.

² Detailed rules are given in the *Lü-shih-ch'un-ch'iu* of the 3rd century B.C.; cf. R. Wilhelm's translation "Frühling und Herbst des Lü Bu-we" (Jena 1928).

who performed at official banquets and private drinking bouts. These girls engaged in promiscuous sexual intercourse with their master, his retinue and his guests. They often changed hands, being sold and re-sold, or offered as presents. The sending of a bevy of beautiful dancing girls was part of the diplomatic routine among the princely courts, and we read that in 513 B.C. an official involved in a lawsuit sent a troupe of such girls to the judge, as a bribe (CC III, p. 445). It is not clear from what classes these girls were recruited. Probably they were mostly slave-girls grown up in the house who had shown a natural talent for dancing and music, but also young female prisoners of war may have been made to enter their ranks. These *nü-yüeh* are the forerunners of the *kuan-chi* "official prostitutes" who in later times occupied such an important position in Chinese social life.

Some profligate princes also kept young boys as catamites (*lian-tung*), or had homosexual relations with adult men. Sources of the Han period and later aver that a number of ministers designated as *pi* "favourites" had homosexual relations with the ruler. However, the term *pi* has the general meaning of "a man—or woman—who obtained the master's favour by fawning upon him and by encouraging him in his vices"; whether, in the case of a man, this implied a homosexual relation is difficult to ascertain, since the ancient texts are so terse as to leave room for widely varying interpretations. An exception is the case of a certain Lung-yang-chün, who in the 4th century B.C. served as minister of the prince of Wei; a passage in the *Chan-kuo-ts'ê*, a source of the third century B.C., proves that he had indeed homosexual relations with his master. Lung-yang-chün has become so notorious in Chinese history that *lung-yang* is used as a common literary term for male homosexuality.

Marriage had now become a factor in politics. Many a prince owed his secure position to the fact that he had married the daughter of a powerful neighbour, and not a few political alliances were broken up because a prince quarreled with his wife and thereby offended her relatives in her home state. Since thus a married woman and her relatives were an influence to be reckoned with, the position of the wife was considerably strengthened, which resulted in greater freedom for her. Women were supposed to be subject to the *san-ts'ung*, the "three dependencies"; when not yet married a woman had to depend on her father, after marriage on her husband, and if she outlived him on her eldest son. But in practice married women often acted quite independently, it was only the unmarried girls that were kept in strict seclusion and had no freedom of action or initiative. Married women enjoyed considerable freedom of movement and if so inclined could find ample opportunity for conducting illicit love affairs both in and outside the house. Inside they could

see their husband's friends and guests and even take part in the latter's discussions—though always standing concealed behind a screen. In this manner they often exercised considerable influence in politics. One of the laments in the Book of Odes, entitled *Chan-yang*, contains a bitter passage about women and eunuchs meddling in affairs of state. Although made to criticize the misrule of King Yu (8th century) who let himself be influenced by his notorious consort Pao-szû (BD no. 1624), the passage doubtless reflects the feeling towards women taking part in public affairs in general. It says:

A clever man builds strong ramparts,
 A clever woman overthrows them.
 Beautiful is the clever wife,
 But her heart as cruel as that of the owl.
 Women with long tongues
 Are harbingers of evil,
 Disasters are not sent down from Heaven,
 They originate in wives.
 These two can neither be taught nor led:
 Wives and eunuchs.
 When they start slandering people,
 At first the ruler does not hide them,
 He even says: They can go nowhere,
 What evil could they do?
 But they are like merchants selling at triple profit.
 All those wiles are known to the wise,
 They do not let wives meddle in public affairs,
 And keep them to their spinning and weaving.

(Book of Odes, no. 264)

Provided they kept themselves concealed behind a screen, women could also listen to musical performances and watch dances. Some princes even let their wives take part in hunting and drinking parties. It is related that in 573 B.C. the Prince Ling had this habit, which was criticised by one of his counsellors (CC II, page 161). Veils for women were unknown, but when going outside they had to ride in chariots with the curtains lowered; only singing girls and women of loose morals went about in chariots with raised curtains.

The harem of a prince was organized after the pattern of that of the king, and supervised by duennas and eunuchs. It is not clear how the latter unfortunates came by their mutilation. Castration was one of the punishments in

use, and one passage states that it was a thus mutilated political offender who had become a eunuch; he calls himself in a conversation with the prince *hsing-chên* "the castrated servant" (CC I, page 351). It seems probable that also poor or ambitious persons voluntarily underwent the operation, hoping thus to obtain a lucrative post at a prince's court; this often was the case with eunuchs of later times.

Although supervised by duennas and eunuchs, married ladies could find sufficient opportunities for illicit amours. And widows, although called *wei-wang-jên* "persons waiting only for death",¹ often remarried or spent their time of waiting in a rather lively manner. Hereunder I quote some historical occurrences that throw light on the sex life of that time.

In 708 B.C. Hua-fu Tu of the princely family of the Sung state meets on the road the wife of K'ung Fu, a high official of that same state, and falls in love with her. The next year he attacks K'ung Fu's mansion, kills him and abducts his wife (CC I, page 67).

A few years later, in 695 B.C., we read that Hsüan-kung, Prince of Wei, had illicit relations with a secondary wife of his own father, and had a son by her, called Chi-tzû. This Chi-tzû was later married to a beautiful princess of the Ch'i state. His father, Hsüan-kung, fell in love with her, took her for himself, and had two sons by her. Then the secondary wife of Hsüan-kung's father mentioned above became jealous of her son's wife, and hanged herself. Chi-tzû's wife then started to plot against her husband, because now she wanted to become his father's principal wife. She calumniated her husband with Hsüan-kung, who thereupon had his own son killed by robbers (CC I, page 120). Cases of sons having sexual relations with their father's wives do not seem to have been rare. In 665 B.C. Hsien-kung, Prince of Chin, remained childless till he had an affair with a secondary wife of his father, who bore him a son and a daughter (CC I, page 194).

In 573 B.C. Ch'ing K'o of the state of Ch'i had illicit relations with the mother of Ling-kung, the prince of that state. He used to visit her clandestinely in the women's quarters, disguised as a woman. He was discovered by two court officials who reprimanded him. Ch'ing K'o reported this to his paramour who thereupon calumniated the two officials; as a consequence one was punished by having his feet cut off, and the other was exiled (CC II, page 154).

The fact that a wife had belonged to another man did not prevent her original husband from taking her back. In 548 B.C. Yu P'an of the state Chêng met on the road someone who was bringing his fiancée to his house for the wedding. Yu P'an took her by force and made her live in a house in

¹ This old term has now become obsolete in colloquial Chinese, but in Japanese it is still the current word for "widow", *bibōjin*.

one of the towns belonging to him. Later the man attacked Yu P'an, killed him and took his wife back with him (CC II, page 384).

The wiles of lewd women were many. In 516 B.C. the widow of a prince had illicit relations with the palace cook. Since she feared that one of the administrators of the palace would denounce her to the family of the dead prince, she made a secondary wife give her a whipping. Then she showed the welts on her body, and accused the administrator of having wanted to rape her, and of having whipped her when she refused his advances (CC III, page 385).

Elsewhere we read that in 599 B.C. Ling, Prince of Ch'ên, together with two of his ministers, had illicit relations with the widow of an official of that state, called Hsia. All three men wore parts of that woman's undergarments in court and made jokes about their sexual relations with her. When another official pointed out to the prince that this was unseemly behaviour, the irate prince had him executed (CC I, page 599).

In 494 B.C. Ling, Prince of Wei, was married to Nan-tzû, a woman notorious because of her incestuous relations with her own brother. To please his wife the prince had this brother even called to his court. This incest was widely known, even the peasants used to sing ribald songs about it in the fields (CC III, page 587). It may be added that Confucius was censured for having gone to visit Nan-tzû, but he refuted all criticism by stating that throughout their interview Nan-tzû had remained standing behind the screen—as was the rule for married women when speaking to men not related to her by blood or marriage (cf. *Lun-yü*, Book VI, 26).

That men and women of standing had many opportunities for meeting each other is attested by the following passage, recorded under the date 537 B.C. An officer called Mu-tzû quarreled with the head of his family and proceeded to the state Ch'i. Arrived in the town Kêng-tung he met a woman who gave him food and let him stay the night with her. The next morning she saw him off part of the way. Later the woman presented herself to him at his court together with a son she had born him, and he adopted her as his favourite wife. There is nothing in the text to suggest that the woman was of low status (CC III, page 89). Under the year 522 B.C. a similar case is recorded. When the Prince of Ch'u stayed in Ts'ai, the daughter of the frontier guard at Chi-yang offered herself to him as a concubine. He accepted, and later she bore him a son (CC III, page 295). Further we read under the year 530 B.C. that a girl in the state of Lu dreamed that she made a canopy for the ancestral hall of the Mêng family. Thereupon she offered herself as a concubine to Mêng Hsi-tzû, together with one of her girl friends, and were accepted (CC III, page 184). Although the motives of the three women concerned were probably quite different—case one and two may point to sexual intercourse as part of the

duties of hospitality, and case three to the obligation to follow a command by the spirits communicated in a dream—the passages show at any rate that men and women met each other freely. These occurrences also prove that often a woman could act in these matters on her own initiative.

An interesting example of a princess choosing her husband herself is related under the year 540 B.C. The prince of Chêng had a beautiful sister who was wanted in marriage by two powerful lords called Tzû-hsi and Tzû-nan. Her brother did not want to risk offending either of the two suitors by refusing and told them that he left the choice to his sister. Tzû-hsi then appeared in the mansion in his best dress, and Tzû-nan in full armour and shooting arrows right and left. The princess looked at the two men from behind the screen and observed: "Tzû-hsi is indeed handsome, but Tzû-nan is a real man. A manly man and a womanly woman, those will form a good pair!" (CC III, p. 22). However, this occurrence, curiously reminiscent of the *svayamvara* "self-choice" so common at the courts of ancient India, seems to have been an exception.

Next to the many passages about unchaste and lewd women, there are also not a few about women who closely adhered to the Rites and who showed great constancy. When the prince of Ch'u and his family were attacked on the road and had to flee, the prefect of Ch'u called Chung Chien followed the prince carrying the young princess Chi Mieh on his back. Later, when the prince wished to give the princess in marriage to someone, she refused saying: "A daughter should not meddle with the selection of her future husband, but Chung Chien has carried me on his back". The prince then gave her in marriage to Chung Chien (CC III, p. 525). The girl's point was not so much that she was grateful to him but rather that since Chung had come into close physical contact with her, the Rites dictated that she could marry no one else.

In 579 B.C. an official of the state of Lu was asked by Ch'i Ch'ou, a distinguished visitor from the state Chin to find a wife for him. The official then took by force the wife of a lower officer called Shih Hsiao-shu and gave her in marriage to Ch'i Ch'ou. The wife said to her husband: "Even birds and quadrupeds do not lightly separate from their mates. What shall you do?" Shih Hsiao-shu replied: "I can not risk being killed or banished by refusing". Thereupon his wife went with Ch'i Ch'ou to Chin, and there bore him two children. After Ch'i Ch'ou had died, the people of Chin sent the woman back to her former husband in Lu. He came to meet her as far as the Yellow River, and there drowned the two children his wife had born Ch'i Ch'ou. His wife said angrily: "Formerly you did not protect your wife and let her be taken away from you. Now you can not treat like a father another man's orphans, and you kill them. Who knows how you shall end!" Then she swore she would never see him again (CC II, page 88).

Under the year 661 B.C. it is recorded that the prince of Lu once constructed a high terrace near the house of a high official of that state, from where he saw that official's daughter. The prince wanted her, but she closed her door against him. Only when the prince promised that he would make her his first wife did she grant him her favours, and later bore him a son (CC I, page 205).

Further, in 665 B.C. Tzû-yüan, prime minister of Ch'u, desired the widow of his brother and went to live next door to her. He organized ceremonial dances in his mansion in order to attract her attention. The princess wept and said: "My late husband used these martial dances for preparing his men for battle. But now our prime minister does not use them for taking revenge on our enemies, but only for approaching this poor widow". Tzû-yüan then repented (CC I, page 196).

In 677 B.C. the prince of Ch'u destroyed the state of Hsi, and took the wife of the prince as his own. She resolutely refused to speak to him until after she had born him two sons. When the prince asked her why she had remained silent so long, she replied: "I, poor woman, had to serve two masters, without even killing myself. What would there have been for me to say?" (CC I, page 162).

Another case of a wife refusing to speak to her husband—though for entirely different reasons—is that of an ugly looking high official who married a beautiful woman. For three years she refused to speak to him. Then one day he took her in his chariot to a lake and there shot a pheasant with his arrow; then his wife for the first time laughed and spoke to him (CC III, page 443, date not indicated).

A husband had the right to repudiate his principal wife. Sterility and incurable disease were recognized as valid reasons, but it seems that if a man really wanted a separation other reasons could easily be found. The main deterrent was the fear for eventual revenge from the side of the relatives of the repudiated wife. If the husband resolved to repudiate his principal wife, he had to send her back to her family, together with her sisters or other female companions he had married simultaneously with her. Under the year 485 B.C. there is recorded an interesting occurrence which shows how this rule landed a husband in emotional complications that proved his undoing. Shih-shu Chi of the state Wei did not care much for his principal wife but was very fond of her niece whom he had married simultaneously as secondary wife. When for political reasons he had to repudiate his principal wife and marry the daughter of a high official, he was loath to separate himself from his former wife's niece. He persuaded her not to go back to her family and installed her in a separate mansion of her own where he treated her as if she

was his principal wife. When the high official heard this he was very angry and wanted to kill Chi. He was dissuaded from doing so, but insisted on taking his daughter away from Chi. Chi thereby lost his prestige, and his official position (CC III, page 674).

How important a role questions of prestige played also in marital relations is proved by an occurrence recorded under the year 540 B.C. The prince of Ch'i once went boating with his wife on a lake in the palace park. The princess made the boat rock. The prince became afraid, "changed countenance" and told her to stop rocking the boat. But she would not listen. The prince was very angry and sent her back to her family, without however formally repudiating her. Her family then married her off to someone else¹ (CC I, page 238).

Finally I quote here a passage that illustrates the strong views held on sins against the exogamic taboo, and on over-indulgence in sexual intercourse. In 540 B.C. the prince of Chin had fallen ill and various cures did not help. Then a counsellor observed that his illness must be due to the fact that he kept in his harem four women of his own surname; he said: "I have heard that a woman of one's own surname should not be admitted into one's harem. Their children will die young, and though the affection between husband and wife may in the beginning be great, it will soon come to an end. Then both will fall ill". Thereafter a physician is called in who declares that the disease is due to over-indulgence in sexual intercourse. When the prince asks him "Am I then not to approach women any more?", the physician replies: "In sexual intercourse one should observe moderation". After having given a long dissertation about the dangers of excesses in other directions, he winds up with: "Woman completes the male force (*yang*) and should be cohabitated with during night. If one goes to excess in his sexual intercourse with her, an internal fever will develop, and the mind becomes affected. Now you do not practise moderation in the sexual act, engaging in it even during daytime. How could you avoid becoming ill?" (CC III, pp. 34 and 37).

This passage proves that the ancient Chinese recognized that the sexual act was harmful if indulged in to excess. But it does not add that they were also

¹ M. Granet interprets in his "La Civilisation chinoise" (pp. 418-419) and later again in his "Catégories matrimoniales" (p. 152) this passage and those about the women refusing to speak as proof that in ancient China existed "marital jousts" which always marked the first three months after the wedding. This is one of the many instances where Granet reads more in a Chinese text than warranted, and mistakes incidental occurrences for a general rule. Granet was one of the great French Sinologues and a highly original thinker, but his works—although always stimulating and important scholarly contributions—are often criticized because of the two tendencies cited.

In this particular case the prince's anger was evidently roused because his prestige with the other ladies and courtiers present had been damaged through his showing fear, and through his wife refusing to obey him. He had "lost face".

convinced that if performed in the right manner, the sexual act benefitted the health of both partners, and even that it could cure diseases. As will be seen below, the latter idea is the key to an understanding of later Chinese sex ideology.

Before going farther into this subject, however, we must first survey the religious beliefs of that time, at least as far as they have a bearing on the formulation of Chinese ideas about the sexual act. Although I shall endeavour to do so as briefly as possible—usually condensing into one line problems about which there exists a voluminous literature—I shall still have to go often into some detail. The reader will have to bear with such digressions, for it was those religious beliefs that have remained till this very day the basis of all Chinese thought on sexual matters, and they shall be continually referred to on the pages of the present volume.

It may be recalled that the ancient Chinese believed in a dual cosmic force that rules the universe and everything contained in it. This deeply-rooted but heretofore vaguely expressed idea began to be systematized in the second half of the Chou period. It seems probable that divination contributed largely to this systematization.

The *scapulomancy* described in the beginning of Chapter I provided a simple "yes" or "no" answer. After divining by means of the dried stalks of the milfoil had been developed, however, it became possible to obtain more explicit information from the oracle. Practically nothing is known about the manner in which the ancient diviner used the milfoil stalks, but it is generally surmised that he divided them at random in whole and broken ones, then threw them on the ground and read the answer of the oracle from their position. These whole and broken stalks suggested a graphic representation of the dual cosmic forces by a whole and a broken line:



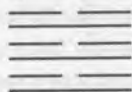
The unbroken line represented the positive, male force in accordance with the above-mentioned number-magic which had fixed odd numbers as expressive of the positive and male forces. The broken line represented the negative, female force because even numbers stood for that element.

With these two lines there were built up eight triagrams, the *pa-kua*, each with its own name, significance and cosmic orientation, as indicated herebelow:

	<i>ch'ien</i>	heaven	South		<i>kên</i>	mountain	NW
	<i>k'un</i>	earth	North		<i>sun</i>	wind	SW
	<i>chên</i>	thunder	NE		<i>li</i>	fire	East
	<i>k'an</i>	water	West		<i>tui</i>	metal	SE

Later tradition credited the mythical Emperor Fu Hsi (see above, p. 10) with the creation of these eight triagrams and considered them—just as arbitrarily—as the origin of the Chinese script. Arranged in a circle according to their cosmic orientation these *pa-kua* have since the Han dynasty figured largely in Chinese applied art.¹

The eight triagrams were again combined into pairs, one superimposed upon the other, and thus forming 64 hexagrams. Below is the 63rd, called *chi-chi* “Completion”, composed of the triagrams *k'an* and *li*.



This series of sixty-four magical symbols constitutes the basis of the old handbooks of divination. The diviners added to each hexagram a few oracular sentences, brief and often ambiguous as most oracular pronouncements usually are. Such texts served as manuals for divination.

One of the manuals, the *I-ching*, literally “Book of Changes”, superseded at an early date all others. Provided with additions and secondary explanations it has remained in use in China and those adjacent countries which adopted Chinese culture till the present day. This book occupied a most important place in the daily life of the Chou people, together with the Book of Odes it seems to have been the only work which was regularly quoted on major occasions in public and private life.

Modern opinions differ as to the date of the explanations and commentaries of the *I-ching*. Later tradition ascribes the basic oracular explanations (*luan*) of the hexagrams to Duke Wên mentioned on page 9 above, averring that he wrote them while imprisoned by the last king of the Yin dynasty. The commentary (*hsi-tz'ü*) on these explanations is ascribed to Chou-kung, one of the founding saints of the Chou dynasty. Finally, it is said that Confucius wrote some of the Ten Appendices. Most modern scholars, however, are agreed that all these attributions are spurious and that apart from the hexagrams and their basic explanations, the text as we have it now dates from the later part of the Chou period, and was considerably revised during the Han dynasty (206 B.C.–220 A.D.).

The *I-ching* calls the negative and positive forces respectively *yin* and

¹ The oldest actual example of the *pa-kua* arranged in this manner known to me is a geomancer's compass of the first century A.D., excavated in Korea; reproduced on Plate 112, in Harada Yoshito, “Lo-lang, report on the excavations of Wang Hsü's tomb”, Tōkyō 1930.

yang. Since ca. the sixth century B.C. these two terms had replaced older terms alluding to the dual cosmic forces, such as heaven and earth, sun and moon etc., and they have remained in use ever since. Unfortunately little is known about the origins of the characters *yin* and *yang*. In later times both are written with the radical "mound", and a phonetic element. *Yin* indicates the region south of a river, and the northern slope of a hill, and *yang* north of a river and the south side of a hill. But these phonetic elements originally were used by themselves and had their own meaning; the former had to do with shadow and clouds, the latter with sun, and light, probably expressed by the picture of a fluttering banner.

The *I-ching* describes *yin* and *yang* as the dual cosmic forces that perpetuate the universe in an unending chain of permutations. This concept was worked out into a philosophical system, approved and utilized by both Confucianists and Taoists (see Index, s.v. *Neo-Confucianism*). Since the beginning of our era this book has thus had a double function: on the one hand it was used as a practical manual of divination, on the other as a philosophical text.¹ Here we are concerned only with those passages where the terms *yin* and *yang* are used in order to formulate clearly thoughts about the relations of the sexes which in a vague form had been existent already since the earliest times.

The *I-ching* stresses that sexual intercourse is the fundament of universal life, it being a manifestation of the cosmic forces *yin* and *yang*. The second part of the Commentary says in section 4: "The constant intermingling of Heaven and Earth gives shape to all things. The sexual union of man and woman gives life to all things". And in the 5th section of the first part it is observed: "The interaction of one *yin* and one *yang* is called Tao (the Supreme Path or Order), the resulting constant generative process is called 'change'." These two passages from the *I-ching* are often quoted in the later handbooks of sex, where "one *yin*" and "one *yang*" are taken to refer to a woman and a man.

The hexagram considered to symbolize the sexual union is no. 63, reproduced above. It consists of the triagram *k'an* "water", "clouds", and "woman" on top, and below the triagram *li* meaning "fire", "light", and "man". The

¹ R. Wilhelm has published a German translation of the entire *I-ching* text, together with a description of how the milfoil stalks are used for divination in later times ("I Ging, das Buch der Wandlungen", Jena 1923); in 1950 there appeared an English translation of Wilhelm's book ("The I Ching or Book of Changes", London, Routledge & Kegan Paul) to which C. G. Jung added an introduction. Modern studies of this fascinating subject are yet in their initial stage, the most important question, viz. what was the origin and basic meaning of the 64 hexagrams?, is still waiting for a final answer. Here I quoted the theory of the whole and broken stalks because, until more archaeological evidence is forthcoming, it is the least unlikely hypothesis.

hexagram expresses through this combination the perfect harmony of man and woman completing each other, graphically depicted by the perfect alternation of *yin* and *yang* lines. To achieve this harmony was considered the basis of a happy and healthy sex life.

Nearly all later Chinese handbooks on sex speculate on the various aspects of this hexagram. Figure 2 reproduces a fine wood-print from the *Hsing-ming-kuei-chih*, a philosophical work of the 17th century, showing the adept studying the perfect balance of the male and female elements as symbolized by the two triagrams *li* and *k'an*. While these speculations will be taken up in greater detail in Chapter IV, it may be remarked here already that it is significant that the element "woman" occupies the upper part of the hexagram; just as significant as the fact that in the binom *yin-yang*, *yin* always comes first; this must be another remnant of the matriarchal emotional reactions mentioned at the beginning of Chapter One. As to the elements "fire" and "water", it may be remarked that medical treatises and books on sex describe the man's sexual experience by comparing it to fire, while that of the woman is likened to water. Fire easily flares up, but it is also easily extinguished by water; water, on the contrary, takes a long time to heat over the fire but it will also cool down very slowly. This is a true image of the actual difference in pre- and post-orgasm experience of man and woman. Chinese medicine, though weak in anatomical science, has always evinced a very shrewd appreciation of psychological factors.

As was remarked above, the *I-ching* speculations about the sexual union as expressed in the *yin-yang* contrast supplanted the older symbolism expressed in natural phenomena. It must be remarked, however, that there was one old symbol that survived all changes, namely that of heaven and earth mating during a rain storm (cf. page 17 above). "Clouds and rain", *yün-yü*, has remained till the present day the standard literary expression for the sexual act. The idea itself goes back to China's remote past, but the *locus classicus* in Chinese literature is of the third century B.C. It occurs in the preface which the great poet Sung Yü added to his "Poetical Essay on Kao-t'ang" (*Kao-t'ang-fu*, text in ch. 19 of the anthology *Wên-hsüan*). There he says that in former times a king once made an excursion to a place called Kao-t'ang. "Feeling tired he there slept during the daytime. He dreamt that he met a woman who said to him: 'I am the Lady of the Wu Mountain, and temporarily reside here in Kao-t'ang. Having heard that you have come here I wish to share pillow and couch with you'. Thereupon the king had sexual intercourse with her. At parting she said: 'I live on the southern slope of the Wu Mountain (*wu-yang*), on the top of a high hill. At dawn I am the morning clouds, in the evening I am the pouring rain. Every morning and every night



Figure 2

Balancing the Male and Female Principles *From the Ming-print Hsing-ming-kuei-chih*

I hover about beneath the Yang terrace'.¹ Here the old cosmic image of heaven and earth mating has been transformed into an elegant story. But it should be noted that here also it is the woman who acts as the instructress in sexual intercourse. Both Chinese sexological and pornographic literature explain the "clouds" as the ova and vaginal secretions of woman, and the "rain" as the emission of semen of the man. Later novels describe the completion of the act in a sentence such as, for instance, "After the rain had come

¹ Cf. also Eberhard's detailed discussion of the Goddess of the Wu-shan in LAC, p. 324.

down, the clouds dispersed". Next to *yün-yü* "clouds and rain", also *wu-shan* "the Wu Mountain", *Wu-yang* "the southern slope of the Wu Mountain", *kao-t'ang*, and *Yang-t'ai* "the Yang terrace" are used in later literature as elegant terms designating sexual intercourse. On the other hand expressions like *fan-yün-fu-yü* "the reverse clouds and the inverted rain" are used to indicate the homosexual act as exercised by two men; cf., for instance, p. 16a of the *Tuan-hsiu-pien* mentioned in footnote 2 on page 63.

It may be added that mists drifting among mountain tops were always considered as harbouring a large amount of *ch'i*. Older literature often refers to kings "ascending a high place" in order to strengthen their *tê* by absorbing the *ch'i* drifting in the air there, and later writers on artistic subjects frequently state that landscape painters generally enjoy good health and a long life because through their profession they are in constant communion with clouds and mountain mists. The same belief is the basis of the popular custom of *têng-kao* "to ascend a high place" which is observed all over the country on the 19th day of the 9th lunar month, and which is supposed to lengthen one's span of life. People climb hills and high places in the mountains and picnic there, and this is supposed to lengthen their span of life. It is difficult to decide whether the concept of rain and clouds being the vital essence of Heaven and Earth mating gave rise to the idea that a large amount of *ch'i* resided in them, or that the latter was the original one.

While the oracle books contributed to the systematization of ancient Chinese religious thought, this systematization was also furthered by the tendency to classify and correlate natural phenomena, a tendency which resulted in the Theory of the Five Elements (*wu-hsing*).¹

Since early times there were distinguished five elements, namely water, fire, wood, metal and earth. These were gradually correlated with stars, seasons, colours, points of the compass, and also with the eight triagrams of the *I-ching*. In the end of the Chou period the following correspondences were in existence:

water	- Yin	- moon	- Mercury	- winter	- North	- "Dark Warrior"
fire	- Yang	- sun	- Mars	- summer	- South	- "Red Bird"
wood	- lesser Yang	- wind	- Jupiter	- spring	- East	- "Green Dragon"
metal	- lesser Yin	- cold	- Venus	- autumn	- West	- "White Tiger"
earth	- Yin and	- thunder	- Saturn	- —	- Centre	- "Yellow Dragon"
	Yang equally divided					

¹ A detailed account of history and implications of the Five Elements theory, together with a comparison with similar theories in other times and places will be found in Needham's SCC, vol. II, p. 232 sq.

The last column lists five mythical animals. The "Dark Warrior" (Hsüan-wu) was a tortoise represented as being fertilized by a serpent; the "Red Bird" (Chuniao) as a phoenix, pheasant or eagle; the "Green Dragon" (ch'ing-lung) and "White Tiger" (po-hu) in their usual stylized forms. In the second half of the Chou period these four were taken as one set, the guardians of the four quarters; but individually these animals occur already in much earlier times.¹ The "Yellow Dragon" (huang-lung) was added later in order to complete the correspondence with the Five Elements.

For our present subject we are concerned only with two of these animals, the Green Dragon and the White Tiger, the one meaning "man", the other "woman". This pair was used from the beginning of our era onward in magical and alchemistic literature as symbolizing the sexual relations between man and woman, and their respective potency.

If one scans the table of correspondences one will ask why the Green Dragon and the White Tiger were selected, since the Red Bird as a fire-sun symbol, and the Dark Warrior as a water-moon symbol, would seem to be a much more obvious choice. So little is known about the history of these animals that it is difficult to give a final answer to this question. I am inclined, however, to seek the solution in the *yin-yang* classification of the animals, although I realize that in doing so I explain terms of the 2nd and 3rd century B.C. by concepts matured and formulated only in the 11th century A.D. My point is that the *I-ching* divides *yin* and *yang* each in a "greater" and a "lesser" aspect; the former represents either force at its maximum, the latter at its minimum. According to the theory of *yin* and *yang* generating each other in an ever-recurrent circular movement, when *yang* is at its minimum it changes into *yin*; *yin* then grows and when it has reached its maximum it changes into *yang*. For *yang* harbours a *yin* element, and *yin* harbours the embryo of *yang*. In the 11th century Neo-Confucianist philosophers represented this concept graphically by the well-known schematic design, a circle divided by a curved line. The right half shows *yang* with a black dot designating the *yin* embryo it harbours, the left half *yin* with a white dot designating the *yang* embryo contained in it.²



¹ About their history, both as religious symbols and as decorative motifs in Yin and Chou art, a voluminous literature exists. Our present knowledge of them has been aptly summarized by W. Perceval Yetts, in his book "The Cull Chinese Bronzes", London 1939, under no. 28.

² Although the philosophical interpretation dates from the 11th century, the design itself is derived from one of the oldest known Chinese decorative motifs, viz. the whorl-circle, often found on Yin bronzes. Cf., for instance, M. Loehr, "Chinese Bronze Age

However late this particular schematic representation may be, I believe that at an early date already the Chinese had realized the implied principle, i.e. that every man has a more or less strongly pronounced feminine element in him, and every woman in her a more or lesser developed masculine element. And that it was because of their recognizing this psychological truth that the Chinese when choosing images that would express as accurately as possible the male and female nature, preferred more complicated and wavering symbols to the simplistic, definite older ones such as heaven and earth, sun and moon etc. Hence they chose the "lesser Yang" Green Dragon and the "lesser Yin" White Tiger, rather than "Yang" Red Bird and the "Yin" Dark Warrior.

Later we shall discuss "dragon" and "tiger" as symbols for man and woman in greater detail; the reader may refer to the Index under the headings *Chou Tun-i*, *Ts'an-l'ung-ch'i*, and *Yellow Turbans*. I mentioned them here already in order to show the concept against its proper historical background.

The *I-ching* and the Five Elements were described here in some detail because the theories developed from them had a decisive influence on the evolution of Chinese ideas on the intercourse of the two sexes. However, in the second half of the Chou dynasty there came to the fore, next to and together with these two systems, a current of thought that is of much wider scope and of much greater importance, both for the history of Chinese religion and culture, and for that of human thought in general. This is the current of thought called Taoism, the basic text of which is the *Tao-tê-ching*, the "Book of the Supreme Way and its Virtue".¹

The Taoists drew the logical conclusion from the belief in living in harmony with the primordial forces of nature, whose fixed path was called *tao*. They reasoned that the greater part of human activities, being manmade, had served only to estrange man from nature, and given rise to an unnatural and artificial human society, with its family, its state, its Rites and Ceremonial, and its arbitrary differentiation of good and bad. They advocated a return to man's pristine simplicity, a return to a Golden Age where people would live long and happily and where there would be no good or bad because everyone

Weapons" (University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 1956), page 149. It is not impossible that at that early time already this whorl-circle stood for some cosmic notion, and that hence the Sung Neo-Confucianists unwittingly restored to it a meaning that had long been forgotten.

¹ There is no Chinese book which has been so often translated into western languages; in 1942 I personally counted 87 different translations in the library of the Dutch Orientalist, the late J. van Manen, in Calcutta. The latest and best translation which dates all preceding ones is J. J. L. Duyvendak, "Tao Te Ching", publ. in The Wisdom of the East Series, London 1954.

would be living in perfect harmony with nature and therefore *per se* could do nothing that was not right. They praised negative as superior to positive, non-action as superior to action. Some of them retired from worldly life and tried in austere meditation to reach communion with the primordial forces of nature. They venerated woman because they considered her as by nature closer to those forces than man, and because in her womb new life is created and fostered. It was that school of Taoists that developed the elevated mysticism contained in the *Tao-tê-ching*, and so brilliantly worked out in the second famous Taoist classic known as the "Book of Chuang-tzû".¹ Others, on the contrary, became recluses in order to try through dietary and other disciplines to attain longevity, with physical immortality as the ultimate goal. They engaged in various alchemistic and also sexual experiments in order to discover the Elixir of Life. They too venerated woman, but chiefly because they thought that her body contained elements indispensable for achieving the alchemistic *opus*. Both groups are called Taoists because, much though their methods differed, their aim was the same: to be completely identified with Tao, the Supreme Order. The former gave world literature some of its finest works, the latter greatly contributed to the development of science in China and abroad.

Although Taoism in both its aspects enjoyed considerable popularity in the later part of the Chou period, it held small appeal for the rulers of those days, whose minds were preoccupied by the practical problems of how to retain, expand and consolidate their political power. In these confused times of kaleidoscopic political changes, statecraft and diplomacy had become as important as military power. For counsel in these matters the princes depended on advisers, mostly chosen from the ranks of the *shih*, the intermediary class of officers. Many a *shih* evolved his own philosophy about administrative and social reforms that would enable a prince to organize his state more efficiently, gain the confidence of his people and rival the Saint Emperors of olden times. These men tried to convince powerful princes of their theories, hoping to be employed by them as counsellors. If one prince would not listen to them, they would move on to another court to expound their views there. One of these *yu-shih* "travelling officers" was Confucius.

Confucius' teachings may be summarized as a protest against the time he lived in. Noting the amoral tendencies among his contemporaries, he stresses *jên* "goodness" as a moral force; if a ruler and his officials would acquire this moral quality, their states would be well-governed and their people content and prosperous on their own account. Seeing the slackening

¹ The best complete translation of Chuang-tzû is R. Wilhelm's German version, "Dschuang Dsi, das Wahre Buch vom Südlichen Blütenland" (Jena 1920).

of the sacred family-ties, he advocated *hsiao* "filial piety", preaching that a closely organized and well-ordered family is the basis of the state. Observing how easily statesmen and generals changed their allegiance, he underlined the importance of *chung* "loyalty to one's master". Noticing that Rites and Ceremonial had largely become an empty form, he wanted to restore to these their original significance. At the same time he emphasized that all these ideas were nothing new, that he was only propagating the tenets of the ideal state that had existed in high antiquity, under the Saint-Kings Huang-ti, Yao and Shun.

Contrary to Taoism, unworldly and basically matriarchal in orientation, Confucius' teaching was fundamentally a practical philosophy adapted to a patriarchal state, he ignored mysticism and what we would call religious problems. But his ideas were too ethical to appeal to the rulers of his day, and his moral campaign was on the whole unsuccessful. However, his outlook on life proved to suit some aspects of Chinese mentality. Devoted disciples continued and elaborated his teachings, which a few centuries later gained the support of the rulers of the Han dynasty. He was then honoured as the Great Sage, and still later became the Great Master of Ten-thousand Ages while the creed connected with his name became a kind of State Doctrine. Confucianism weathered all attacks by Taoists and Buddhists and even survived the drastic reforms instituted in recent years by the Chinese People's Republic in so far that Confucius is officially recognized as one of the great men of China's history; in 1957 the annual celebrations in his temple in Ch'ü-fu (Shantung) were revived.¹

About Confucius' personal attitude to woman we know next to nothing. The only indication might be found in a passage in the *Lun-yü* where he is credited with the shrewd but rather unkind pronouncement: "Women and people of lowly station are difficult to deal with. If one is too friendly with them they become obstreperous, and if one keeps them at a distance they become resentful" ("Analects", penultimate passage of Book XVII). At any rate in his system as it was worked out by his successors woman was assigned a lower place. The Confucianist school states that woman is absolutely and unconditionally inferior to man. Her first and foremost duty is to serve and obey her husband and his parents, to look well after the household, and bear healthy male children. Her biological function is emphasized, and her emotional life given secondary consideration. Chastity being a requisite for an orderly family life and undisturbed continuation of the lineage, great stress

¹ A good critical study of Confucius himself and his views is A. Waley, "The Analects of Confucius", London 1949. For "official" Confucianism see J. K. Shryock, "Origin and Development of the State Cult of Confucianism", New York 1932.

was laid on women leading a blameless life. To ensure this the Confucianists advocated the complete separation of the sexes, and carried it through to its most absurd consequences, such as that husband and wife should not hang their garments on the same clothesrack. The ideal woman was she who concentrated all her efforts on her household tasks, she was the *nei-jên* "she who is within".¹ Participation in outside affairs and especially in public matters was abhorred, and branded as the root of all evil and the cause of the downfall of the great dynasties.

The above is a highly condensed summary of Taoism and Confucianism. These were the two ways of thought that together have moulded Chinese life and behaviour. Mutually influencing each other and, despite their different aims, still having many points in common, a man could—and usually did—adhere to both doctrines at the same time. The world outlook and way of life of most Chinese is indeed a combination of both.

As regards the relations between man and woman, it may be stated that whereas Confucianism determined the social position of man and woman and their respective place and duties in the family, their sexual relations were governed mainly by Taoist ideology. Outside the bedchamber the wife was often not more than an indispensable but emotionally negligible member of the household, inside the bedchamber she was not seldom the Great Instructress, guardian of the arcana of sex.

Next to Taoism and Confucianism there arose in the later part of the Chou dynasty numerous other philosophical systems. This era was indeed the golden age of Chinese thought, often called the Period of the Hundred Philosophers. However, since their theories did not influence directly contemporary or later sex life, their works are here passed over in silence.

This First Part may be concluded with a summary of the fundamental Chinese ideas on sex. In order to give a complete picture we shall have to anticipate some facts that can be proved only by post-Chou data, such as the "hand-books of sex". But there are sufficient grounds for believing that such ideas, though not yet clearly formulated in Chou sources, were then already existent.

In the first place, the ancient Chinese had no clear conception of the physiological function of the female generative organs. They did not know that fertilization is effected by the union of the man's sperma cells with the woman's ova. They did not distinguish between general vaginal secretions and the ova, but considered the latter and all secretions and fluids of uterus and vulva together as *yin* essence—a lining of the womb necessary for allowing the male semen to develop into an embryo. Hence the term *ching* in its sense of "semen,

seed" is used almost exclusively for the male sperma cells, while the ova are referred to as *ch'i* "essence", or *hsieh* "blood".¹ Furthermore the ancient Chinese had arrived at the erroneous conclusion that while man's semen is strictly limited in quantity, woman is an inexhaustible receptacle of Yin essence.^{1a}

Sexual intercourse was considered to have a twofold aim. Primarily, the sexual act was to achieve the woman's conceiving, so that she would give birth to sons to continue the family. Not only did one thus fulfil his assigned role in the order of the universe, but it was also the sacred duty to one's ancestors, since the well-being of the dead in the Hereafter could only be ensured by regular sacrifices made by their descendants on earth. Secondly, the sexual act was to strengthen the man's vitality by making him absorb the woman's *yin* essence, while at the same time the woman would derive physical benefit from the stirring of her latent *yin* nature.

As a matter of course these two aims were closely interwoven. In order to obtain healthy male children the man's *yang* essence should be at its apex when he ejaculates, and in order to develop his *yang* essence to this apex he should cohabit frequently with different women without emitting semen, thus supplementing his *yang* by their *yin*.

It follows that the man was supposed to ejaculate when exercising the coitus only on those days when the woman was most liable to conceive; or, in Chinese terms, when her womb contains sufficient activated *yin* essence to provide the proper breeding ground for the man's semen. The ancient Chinese thought that the five days after menstruation were the most favourable time. On all other days the man was to strive to let the woman reach orgasm without he himself emitting semen. In this manner the man would benefit by every coitus because the *yin* essence of the woman, at its apex during the orgasm, strengthens his vital powers, while the woman's *yin* essence is stirred and intensified so as to promote the chance of her conceiving when, on a subsequent occasion, the man would allow himself to reach orgasm. This principle implied that the man had to learn to prolong the coitus as much as possible without reaching orgasm; for the longer the member stays inside, the more *yin* essence the man will absorb, thereby augmenting and strengthening his vital force.²

¹ Exactly the same idea is found with the 17th-century Western alchemists; they also considered the ova as "blood". See, for instance, the curious small book by "Albertus Magnus", entitled "De Secretis Mulierum" (Amsterdam 1665).

^{1a} The bedroom manuals typically do not presuppose that the woman's store of essence is inexhaustible. This is precisely why men are counseled to choose several partners: if a practitioner of the art copulates with the same woman continually, she will lose all her essence and be of little value of him. Cf. p. 138, below. [PRG]

² It may be added that the concept of woman benefiting man's vitality through the coitus was by no means limited to China only. I refer to the Biblical story of King David and the girl Abishag, in Kings I, 1-4. The idea was worked out further by some 17th- and 18th-century European alchemists. I mention Cohausen's curious book "Hermippus Redivivus, or the Sage's triumph over old age and the grave, wherein a method is laid down for prolonging the life and vigour of man", 3d edition London 1771.

Therefore the later handbooks of sex teach that just before reaching the climax the man should restrain himself. He should prevent ejaculation either by mental discipline or by such physical means as compressing the seminal duct with his fingers. Then his *yang*-essence, intensified by its contact with the woman's *yin*, will "flow upwards" along the spinal column¹ and fortify his brain and his entire system. If therefore the man limits his emissions to the days when the woman is liable to conceive, his loss of Yang essence on those occasions will be compensated by the obtaining of children perfect in body and mind. Thus these theories are narrowly related not only to the health of the parents, but also to that of their offspring. This is the basis of the Chinese conception of eugenics.

Since the above theories have throughout the ages formed the fundamental principle of Chinese sexual relations, the curious conclusion is that, for more than two thousand years, the *coitus reservatus* must have been widely practised in China without apparently affecting adversely the progeniture and general health of the race.

The polygamic family system contributed to this principle being maintained throughout the centuries. Accustomed to practising the *coitus reservatus*, a householder could satisfy the sexual needs of his wives and concubines without injuring his health and potency.

Thus in Chinese literature on sex the following two basic facts are stressed again and again. First, a man's semen is his most precious possession, the source not only of his health but of his very life; every emission of semen will diminish this vital force, unless compensated by the acquiring of an equivalent amount of *yin* essence from the woman. Second, the man should give the woman complete satisfaction every time he cohabitates with her, but he should allow himself to reach orgasm only on certain specified occasions.

The above basic thoughts explain fully the ancient Chinese attitude to all phenomena of sex, as expressed in both old and later writings on this subject. We shall rapidly review these hereunder.

Self-abuse for a man is forbidden, for this implies a complete loss of vital essence. Medical books only condone it in cases when special circumstances deprive a man of female company, and when the "devitalized semen", *pai-ching*, (i.e. semen activated inside the body for a protracted period) might clog his system.

Involuntary emissions during sleep are viewed with concern. They constitute

¹ From a purely physiological standpoint this belief is erroneous, since the seminal fluid thus stopped will enter into the bladder. However, there may be concomitant symptoms in the nervous system that might react in the manner indicated. We enter here upon a borderland of psycho-physiology that is as yet insufficiently explored.

not only a total loss of vital essence, but there is also the possibility that they are induced by evil spirits who want to weaken a man's resistance against their devilry. Worse, they may be caused by incubae (most often fox-spirits)¹ who want to steal the man's vital essence through having intercourse with him in his dreams. Therefore, if the emission is induced by the man seeing a woman in his dream, he must be on his guard against that woman if he actually meets her, for she may be a vampire or a fox-spirit.

Masturbation practised by women is viewed with tolerance, since woman's *yin* supply is considered to be unlimited in quantity. But medical books warn against excessive use of artificial means (*olisbos* e.a.), which is liable to damage "the lining of the womb". A very tolerant attitude is taken also towards sapphism, and for the same reason. It is also recognized that when a number of women are obliged to live in continuous and close proximity, the occurrence of sapphism can hardly be avoided.

Homosexuality of men is not mentioned in the handbooks of sex, because those are exclusively concerned with conjugal relations. Literary sources in general adopt a neutral attitude as long as it is engaged in by grown-up persons, it being taken that intimate contact between two *yang* elements can not result in a total loss of vital force for either of them. It is denounced in those cases—according to Chinese historical records not rare in court circles—where one of the partners abused the emotional tie for obtaining excessive material profit, or for inciting his partner to unjust or criminal deeds. It is praised if such a relationship inspired great artistic achievements. It may be added that while female homosexuality was widely spread, male homosexuality was rare in early times up till the Han dynasty; during that period it was at times deemed fashionable, and it seems to have flourished especially in the early part of the Liu-ch'ao period, and again during the Northern Sung dynasty (960–1127 A.D.). From then onward till the end of the Ming dynasty (1644 A.D.) male homosexuality was of not more frequent occurrence than in most other normal western civilizations.²

¹ Chinese folklore credits foxes with the magic power of changing themselves into beautiful young women in order to bewitch men. See Index s.v. *foxes*.

² Although this book is not concerned with the Ch'ing dynasty (1644–1912 A.D.) and after, I may add that I find it difficult to believe the assertions made by many foreign observers that during the 11th and the beginning of the 20th century male homosexuality and pederasty were rampant in China. I rather think that this wrong impression was created by the fact that homosexual relations received undue emphasis with foreign observers because social etiquette of that time was rather tolerant to the public manifestation of these relations (men walking hand in hand in the street, presence of catamites at theatrical performances, etc.), whereas heterosexual relationships were strictly confined to private life. Moreover, many foreign students based their opinion on the observation of

As regards the actual consummation of the act, preliminary and accessory play were described as compulsory, and the handbooks give explicit instructions to the man on this subject. It was considered as necessary for preparing the woman properly for sexual congress, and for rousing and activating her *yin* essence. Kissing including contact of lips and tongue played an important role in the preliminary play.¹ Further, the handbooks go into great detail about the various positions the partners can assume during the act. It must be emphasized that such descriptions were not meant to amuse the reader—the handbooks of sex were definitely meant for serious instruction and not for entertainment—but to suggest variety so as to prevent the man from losing interest in his conjugal duties, as was liable to happen because of the restrictions imposed in the reaching of orgasm. Fellatio was permitted but only as a preliminary or an accessory to the actual union, it must never result in the man having a complete emission. The slight loss in semen and secretions incurred is deemed to be compensated by the *yin* essence the man obtains from the woman's saliva. Anal sex with a woman is also permitted for similar reasons. Cunnilingus is approved of, because it prepares the woman for the act and simultaneously procures *yin* essence for the man; it is frequently referred to, especially in texts of Taoist colouring.

Association with prostitutes was regarded as part of the outdoors-amusement both single and married men were entitled to. Since such intercourse was not aimed at the procreation of offspring, it was considered as essentially different and completely apart from the conjugal intercourse exercised by a man with his wives and concubines, and therefore the handbooks of sex do not include this subject. Because of the same reason all taboos regarding conjugal intercourse cease to operate in the case of intimacy with a prostitute. I mention especially the strict prohibition of marrying a wife or taking a concubine who bears one's own surname, the "name-incest" referred to in Chapter I. Men did not even inquire after the surname of the professional women they had casual relations with, they knew them as a rule only by the new personal name they adopted when being registered as a prostitute. A patron tried to ascertain a prostitute's surname only when contemplating to change the

Chinese immigrant communities outside China, where there was a scarcity of Chinese women and hence an abnormal tendency towards homosexuality.

¹ Since the Chinese considered kissing in any form as belonging to the sexual act, it was not supposed to be practised outside the bedchamber. Therefore 18th and 19th century foreign visitors to China never saw it, and arrived at the wrong conclusion that the Chinese did not kiss at all. The Chinese, on their part, when they observed western women kissing men in public, wrongly thought that all those women were prostitutes, and of the lowest category too, since Chinese prostitutes of any standing would only kiss men in private.

casual liaison into a permanent alliance by taking her into his house as a concubine.

Some writers stated that intercourse with prostitutes did not imply a man's wanton spending of semen, because such women through frequent intercourse with numerous men had developed a particularly strong and abundant *yin*-essence, and therefore gave back their patron more than he lost. But such theories were abandoned after Chinese medical science had begun to connect certain diseases with the sexual act. And when circa 1500 A.D. syphilis had been identified, all serious medical treatises warn against the risks involved in copulation with prostitutes.

Visiting prostitutes was considered as a legitimate pastime for men, and the prostitutes themselves were not viewed with contempt because of their profession, which was a legitimate one with its recognized place in the social system. Voluntary abstention of sexual intercourse, and celibacy of men and women were, on the contrary, viewed with contempt and profound suspicion. It was beyond the understanding of the average Chinese that any man could wilfully harm his ancestors by allowing the family-line to be broken off, and could wantonly evade his duties to society. Voluntary celibacy of women was also sharply denounced, such women were suspected of being vampires or harbouring nefarious designs, and they were often persecuted, both by the authorities and by the population. It stands to reason that Buddhist, and later also Catholic missionaries found in this attitude of the Chinese a serious obstacle to the propagation of their creed.

Finally, the obtaining of healthy offspring being considered of such paramount importance, the old manuals of sex and medical books lay great stress on eugenics. Prenatal care is discussed in the minutest detail, including dietetics, while also the care of the woman during the post-parturition period received much attention. Already during the later part of the Chou period it was ruled that a husband may not approach his wife, not even touch or fondle her, three months before and after parturition.

All points raised in the above summary will be found elaborated and illustrated on the pages that follow. Here I wish to stress only one fact, namely that since the Chinese considered the sexual act as part of the order of nature, and the exercise of it the sacred duty of every man and woman, it was never associated with a feeling of sin or moral guilt. That the sexual act was exercised in the privacy of the family circle, and hedged in by later Confucianist rules of decorum and correct behaviour, was not because it was considered as something shameful that ought to be hidden, but only because it was a sacred act and hence, just like other ritual performances such as sacrifice to the

ancestors and prayer, not to be engaged in or to be talked about in front of outsiders.

It was probably this mental attitude, together with the nearly total lack of repression, that caused ancient Chinese sexual life to be on the whole a healthy one, remarkably free from the pathological abnormalities and aberrations found in so many other great ancient cultures.

CHAPTER THREE

CHIN AND FORMER HAN DYNASTY

CHI'N, 221 B.C.-206 A.D.

SECOND PART

THE GROWING EMPIRE

Chi'n, Han and Liu-Ch'ao Periods, 221 B.C.-589 A.D.

Sex and the Three Religions: Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism

NOU LIDIAN

THE GROWING EMPIRE

SECOND PART

THE GROWING EMPIRE

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CHAPTER THREE

CH'IN AND FORMER HAN DYNASTY

(221 B.C.-24 A.D.)

In the third century B.C., while the princes were exhausting their military and economic resources in their wars for the hegemony, in the extreme west of the realm, in the region now consisting of the provinces Shensi and Kansu, there had been rising a new state, called Ch'in. Its ruler was a capable and resolute man who had adopted the principles of the authoritarian Legalist school¹ and thereby built up a well-organized and efficient military state. Ch'in deposited Nan-wang, the last, powerless King of Chou, and conquered all the older and newer states. In 221 B.C. the first ruler of this re-united and expanded China proclaimed himself the First Emperor of the Ch'in dynasty, Ch'in-shih-huang-ti.

He made a series of sweeping political and economic reforms, such as replacing the feudal hierarchy by a state-appointed bureaucracy, redistributing the land to the peasants, and the division of the realm into administrative units. He wanted to destroy with one stroke everything that reminded people of the old order, and thus ordered the destruction of all the books of the former dynasty, with the exception of those on divination, medicine and agriculture—lest “people utilize the past for criticizing the present”.

Many of the reforms introduced were great improvements, but the changes were too abrupt. Moreover, when the Ch'in Emperor had overthrown the old powerful families, he thereby had cleared the path for new, energetic men from the people who could not bear his authoritarian régime. It was they who revolted against the First Emperor's weak successor, who was defeated in 207 B.C. After a short but sanguinary civil war a resourceful general of humble descent, called Liu Pang, founded the Han dynasty, which with one brief break was to rule China for more than four hundred years, from 206 B.C. till 220 A.D.

Taken all together the Han dynasty was one of the glorious periods in

¹ The philosophers of the Legalist school (fa-chia) advocated a dictatorial system of government, a state ruled by an absolute king and strictly utilitarian laws, and where moral values and the interests of the people were subordinate to an inexorable *raison d'état*.

Chinese history. Standing on the threshold between old and new, it was during this period that the Chinese state received its definite mould.

It was a time of enormous territorial expansion. The new Empire conquered the whole of modern south China till the borders of Indo-China and Burma, in the west it expanded its frontier till the border of Tibet. In the north the imperial armies subjugated Manchuria and Korea, in the northwest they penetrated till the heart of Central Asia. This expansion had in its wake a lively exchange of cultural goods between China and the outer world, including Iran and the Roman Empire.

The Palace cult of the Han rulers was predominantly Taoist. It was intended to enhance the Emperor's position as Lord of the Universe, of super-human magical potency and longevity. The rulers surrounded themselves with Taoist alchemists and magicians, with whom they engaged in the search for the Elixir of Life, and the quest for the Isles of the Immortals. It was in this period that the Taoist pantheon was enriched with new deities supposed to be special protectors of the ruler, and that new and imposing religious ceremonies were instituted. In this period the male and female elements in the universe were personified in the mythical couple of Fu-hsi and Nü-kua. This pair was represented as a man and woman with fish-tails instead of legs, as shown on Plate I. The entwined tails evidently suggest sexual congress, but the meaning of the geometrical instruments they carry in their hands has not yet been satisfactorily explained.

Whereas Taoism was the personal religion of the Han rulers, they had to find also a more practical system of thought that would supply their colossal realm with a solid ideological basis. The Legalist school which had contributed so much to the rise of Ch'in proved too harsh and simplistic for the administration of a consolidated empire. While casting about for a system that would guarantee political stability while at the same time being suited to the new social and economic situation, they chose Confucianism, and resolved to model their empire on the pattern of an idealized early-Chou realm, as Confucius had conceived of it.

A determined effort was made to reassemble the Chou texts dispersed or destroyed on the orders of the Ch'in Emperor. Scholars were set to work on those texts, and they started to edit them so as to make them accord with the ideals of the Confucianist school. These re-written Chou-texts became the Classics of Confucianism (see page 15, note 1), and have remained so till well into the nineteenth century. Then progressive Chinese scholars began to question their authenticity, and since that time a critical re-appraisal of those texts has been one of the major tasks of sinology in both east and west.

Especially with regard to the old data on sexual relations the Han Con-

Confucianists had to use many a *tour de force* in order to make the conditions attested by Chou material accord with the Confucianist standards of morality. They were shocked by the marriage customs of the common people as described in the *Book of Odes*, and therefore stated that all the courting and mating during the spring festivals took place under the supervision and on the orders of a special official, called *mei-shih* "Middle-man". That official carefully registered names and ages of all boys and girls, and saw to it that the former were married at the age of 30, the latter when they were 20. In the spring of every year he assembled all the marriageable young men and women in his resort, and ordered them to choose their mates and consummate the union without the ceremony of marriage. Those who did not choose a partner were punished.¹ All this appears highly improbable, the official called *mei-shih* must be considered as a fabrication by the Han scholars, who wanted to give the sexual habits of the common people at least some kind of official character. However, when later Confucianism had become the state religion, the commentators found even this chastened Han-version too liberal, and added to the passage quoted a note to the effect that it was a spurious addition, inserted during the reign of the usurper Wang Mang, a convenient scape-goat.²

The Han rulers though personally more inclined to Taoism, patronized Confucianist learning. Not only because it gave their Empire an ideological foundation, but also because the uprooting of the feudal system coupled with the unprecedented territorial expansion created a great demand for administrative personnel. They had retained the Ch'in system of dividing the realm into separate administrative units, the "commanderies" (*chün*), each governed by a Grand Administrator, and "fiefs" (*kuo*) given to members of the imperial family and meritorious statesmen. Each of these units was subdivided into prefectures (*hsien*), governed by a Prefect (*ling*). All these officials had large staffs. In order to man this complicated new bureaucratic machinery an extensive personnel was needed, able to read and write and conversant with the rules and regulations. The Confucianist scholars were the only class from which competent personnel could be recruited in the required numbers. From this time onward the "scholar-officials" have played a predominant role in the Chinese civil and military service.

The Confucianist scholars carried through consequently the system developed by Confucius' disciples. They reaffirmed that the family was the fundament of the state, the man its head, and woman a biologically indispensable but

¹ Cf. *Chou-li* "Rites of Chou", Book XIII, 43-46. This Classic is a mine of information, but should be used with caution because of the arbitrary manner the Han Confucianists handled the text. It has been translated into French by E. Biot, under the title "*Le Tcheou-li ou Rites de Tcheou*", 3 vols. Paris 1815, Peking reprint 1939.

² Wang Mang's rule lasted only a few years; see p. 86 below.

decidedly inferior member of the household. The institution of marriage was extolled, but the personal significance of the wife treated as a matter of secondary importance.

These principles are clearly laid down in the *Li-chi*, the "Book of Rites", an extensive collection of heterogeneous texts of greatly diverging date, dealing with rites and ritual. Regarding marriage this text lays the following words in the mouth of Confucius:

If Heaven and Earth were not mated, the myriad things would not have been born. It is by means of the great rite of marriage that mankind subsists throughout the myriad generations.

(*Li-chi*, ch. 50, section *Ai-kung-wên*)

A consequence of this elevated conception of marriage was that every woman, however poor, stupid or ugly, could claim the right to obtain a husband. On higher social levels every householder was bound in duty to provide husbands for everyone of the women employed by him, and among the lower classes and the peasantry the supplying of suitable mates to every single maid or woman in their midst was a communal obligation. And as appears from the discussion of the *mei-shih* here above, this obligation was endorsed by the authorities.

Since the Confucianists recognized that lax morals formed the most serious menace to a stable family-life and undisturbed continuation of the lineage, they laid great stress on the old principle of the separation of the sexes. The *Li-chi* says elsewhere:

The Rites are founded on the correct relation of man and wife. In the dwelling house, outside and inside are clearly divided; the man lives in the outer, the women in the inner apartments. The latter are located at the back of the house, the doors are kept locked, and guarded by eunuchs. (Without valid reason) the men do not enter, neither do the women leave them.

Man and woman do not use the same clothes-rack, a wife shall not make bold to hang her garments on her husband's clothes-horse, neither shall she place them in the same chests. Husband and wife shall not bathe together. If the husband is absent, his wife shall place his pillow in a box, put his mats in their covers, and lock them away. Young persons shall serve their elders, all in the same manner as a wife serves her husband. The Rites regulating the relation of man and wife are valid only till they have reached their seventieth year, then there is no objection any more to their storing their personal apparel together.

(*Li-chi*, section *Nei-tse*, II, 13 sq.)

Men shall not speak about their women's quarters, the women there shall not speak about the men's affairs. Except when taking part in

sacrificial or funerary ceremonies, a man and a woman shall not give anything directly one to the other from hand to hand. If a man gives something to a woman, she receives it on a bamboo tray; should such not be available, both shall squat, the man places the object on the floor and the woman then takes it up. Men and women shall not go to the same well, nor to the same bathing place. (Husband and wife) shall not share the same sleeping mat, and shall not borrow each other's things, including articles of dress. What is said within the women's quarters shall not become known outside, what is said among men outside shall not be divulged to the women. When the man enters his women's quarters, he shall not sing or point with his hands. When going outside at night he shall carry a lamp, if he has no lamp he shall stay inside. When a woman goes out she shall veil her face; if she goes outside at night she shall carry a lamp, if she has no lamp she shall stay inside. Walking in the street the men shall keep to the right, the women to the left.

(*Li-chi*, section *Nei-tse*, I, 12)

The general rule was that all physical contact of husband and wife should be strictly confined to the married couch. Having left the bed they should avoid all direct or indirect contact, they had to take care not to touch each other's hands when giving things to each other, they should not use the same cup or plate while taking food and drink. It should be added, however, that the bed was much more than a mere couch, it was a spacious bedstead, really a small room in itself. It had four pillars, connected by latticework and round those there were curtains. Inside this screened-off compartment there was a stand with a mirror and toilet articles, a clothes horse etc. The bedstead depicted on Plate IV, though painted a few centuries later, gives in the main a good idea of that in use during the Han period. But even in the privacy of this bedstead man and wife should not call each other by their names. These rules applied not only to the husband and his principal wife, but also to all his other wives and concubines.

All these rules by no means imply, however, that the Confucianists considered the sexual act as a "sin", and woman as the origin of this sin—as did the medieval Christian Church; no conception was farther from them than the "abomination of the flesh". The Confucianist abhorrence of sexual dalliance was determined mainly by the fear that wantonness might disrupt the sacred family life, and also by their reverence for the process of human procreation—one aspect of the eternal self-renewal of the Universe—, a solemn process that must not be debased by (in their view) superfluous amorous play. Therefore, although the Confucianists considered woman as inferior to man, this idea appeared as natural to them as that of Earth being inferior to Heaven; it did by no means imply that they hated or despised woman, as many a medieval Christian churchman did.

Moreover, women had their own vested rights, and one of those was the right to satisfaction of their sexual needs. Although physical contact was strictly limited to the bedstead, there the husband had to give all his women the personal attention he was supposed to deny them as soon as they had left the bed. The *Li-chi* mentions sexual neglect of one of the women as a grave offense, age nor beauty should make the husband deviate from the strict protocol set for sequence and frequency of his sexual intercourse with his wives and concubines. It says:

Even if a concubine is growing older, as long as she has not yet reached the age of fifty, the husband shall copulate with her once every five days. She on her part shall, when she is led to his couch, be cleanly washed, neatly attired, have her hair combed and properly done up, and wear a long robe and properly fastened house shoes.

There were a number of by-rules, i.e. that if the principal wife was not there, a concubine was not to stay the entire night with the husband, but had to leave the bedstead after the consummation of the sexual act.

Only the periods of mourning for close relatives (lasting three months and more) gave the husband a valid reason for abstaining from sexual intercourse with his wives and concubines. His conjugal duties ceased completely only after he had reached the age of seventy (other texts give sixty). Then the rules of the separation of the sexes lapsed too, husband and wife could touch each other also outside the bedroom, and place their clothes in the same box.

The strict regulation of the relations between man and woman laid down in these Confucianist texts leads to the conclusion that in that time moral laxity prevailed and that it was at least in part in reaction thereto that the Han scholars laid so much stress on the rules regarding the separation of the sexes. This laxity is easily explained. The old feudal loyalties had been dissolved, a new intermediary class was rising that had the social position and wealth but not the moral traditions and restraints of the feudal aristocracy. And the new teachings had not yet taken root.

This moral uncertainty is clearly noticeable in sexual life at the princely courts. In the Imperial Palace the strong personality of the first Han Emperor and the decorum of the Palace prevented excesses, but at the princely courts in the fiefs dissolution and license held sway. The princes of the Chou states had been restrained to a certain extent by their old traditions and by the rites and ceremonial, and their wives, chosen from the princely families of other states, were educated in the same atmosphere, and knew themselves to be fairly secure in their position; as we have seen in Chapter II, the worst that could happen to a wife was to be returned to her own family. Now, however, practically any woman of personal charm could qualify for becoming a prince's

spouse, and her position and that of her relatives depended solely on her husband's favour. This is one of the factors that may serve to explain the abominable dramas that were often enacted in the seclusion of the women's quarters of the princely courts.

Especially the relatives of the Emperor Hsiao-ching (156-140 B.C.) were for the greater part degenerates and sadists, they had incestuous relations with their sisters and other female relatives, and debauched every married woman that took their fancy. And their consorts and concubines were often not much better. Chapter 53 of the Former Han Dynasty paints a sombre picture of sexual life at the courts of those princes.

Prince Tuan suffered from "withering of his potency", *yin-wei*, and became ill every time he had to approach a woman. He had, however, a boy-lover whom he killed with his own hands when he discovered that he had illicit relations with his harem ladies.

Prince Chien was a sadistic degenerate who debauched his sisters and had boys and girls drowned in the palace lake to amuse him. He had offending harem ladies stand naked in the court all day to beat the time drum, had them sit naked in trees for days on end, or starved them to death. As for the other women, he ordered them to be stripped of their clothes and to bend over with their hands on the ground. Then he made dogs and rams have intercourse with them.

Ch'ü, prince of Kuang-ch'uan, had two favourite consorts called Wang Chao-p'ing and Wang Ti-yü. When he fell ill a concubine called Chao-hsin looked after him and gained his favour. Once when the prince was sporting with Ti-yü he found a dagger in her sleeve. When whipped and questioned Ti-yü confessed that she and Chao-p'ing had planned to kill Chao-hsin out of jealousy. Ch'ü then questioned Chao-p'ing who confessed after she had been seared with iron rods. Thereupon the prince assembled all his womenfolk, killed Ti-yü by cutting off her head himself, and had Chao-hsin kill Chao-p'ing. He made Chao-hsin his principal wife. She became jealous of a concubine called Tao Wang-ch'ing and calumniated her saying that Wang-ch'ing had shown herself naked to a painter who was doing her portrait. When thereafter she also accused Wang-ch'ing of adultery, the prince had her whipped and had the other women burn her with hot needles. Wang-ch'ing ran to a well to drown herself but Chao-hsin had her drawn up and killed her by forcing a rod into her vagina. Then she cut off the victim's nose, tongue and lips and had the body burned. Later the prince showed preference for another concubine called Yung-ai, and Chao-hsin calumniated her. Yung-ai threw herself down a well in order to escape torture, but Chao-hsin had her pulled out and whipped till she confessed to adultery. The naked girl was tied to a pillar and burned with a white-hot rod. After her eyes had been dug out and her thighs cut with a knife, Ch'ü ordered molten lead to be poured into her mouth.

Chao-hsin had also fourteen other women killed. Further, Ch'ü used to hold drunken orgies where he had naked musicians perform.

Ch'ü's son Hai-yang was not better than his father, he also had many incestuous relationships. He had the walls of his hall painted with pictures of naked men and women engaged in the sexual act, and made his male and female relatives take part in drunken parties there. For this reason later Chinese literature mentions him—quite arbitrarily—as the inventor of erotic pictures.

The Emperors often made efforts to restrain the princes when their excesses were brought to their notice. Emperor Hsiao-ching degraded Prince Ch'ü for the outrages related above, and had his favourite Chao-hsin publicly executed. But the Emperors themselves were complex personalities, and their private life was certainly very far removed from the strict Confucianist teachings which they officially patronized.

The first three Emperors, Kao-tsu (i.e. Liu Pang, the founder of the dynasty, 206–195 B.C.), Hui-ti (194–188 B.C.) and Wên-ti (179–157 B.C.) were pronouncedly bi-sexual, next to their regular intercourse with the uncounted harem-ladies all three had relations with young men. During Hui-ti's reign these boys were clad like officials, with gold-pheasant caps and gem-studded girdles; they powdered and rouged their faces and were constantly in the Emperor's bedchamber. Emperor Wên's homosexual proclivities were encouraged by his Taoist studies. He once dreamed that a boatman ferried him over to the Abode of the Immortals. When later he saw a good-looking young boatman called Têng T'ung who resembled the man seen in his dream, he made him his favourite boy-lover, and showered wealth and honours on him. This same Emperor sought assiduously for the Elixir of Life, and together with Taoist adepts engaged in various alchemistic experiments.

The Emperor Wu (140–87 B.C.) had from his boyhood a homosexual friend called Han Yen, an able man who remained his companion for many years till he was slandered and perished. This same Emperor had also two young men as constant companions; when one of them had illicit relations with the harem ladies the other killed him. The Emperor flew into a rage, but when the killer had explained his reason, the Emperor wept and his love for him increased. Another homosexual favourite of this Emperor was Li Yen-nien, an actor who because of some crime he committed had been castrated. After his mutilation he developed a beautiful voice and rose high in the Emperor's favour. The Emperor, however, was also deeply devoted to this actor's sister, the Lady Li, and was disconsolate when she died. He then wrote the famous poem:

No more is the swishing of her silken sleeves,
 Dust gathers on the smooth steps of her court.
 Her empty rooms are cold and lonely,
 Yellow leaves pile up against the double-barred doors.
 How do I long for that beautiful lady!
 How shall my troubled heart find rest?¹

The Emperor even had one of his Taoist magicians, called Shao-wêng, try to evoke her spirit, which he thought he saw projected for one brief moment on a gauze screen.

The last Emperor of the Former Han dynasty, Ai-ti (6-1 B.C.) had a number of boy-lovers, the best known of them was a certain Tung Hsien. Once when the Emperor was sharing his couch with Tung Hsien, the latter fell asleep lying across the Emperor's sleeve. When the Emperor was called away to grant an audience, he took his sword and cut off his sleeve rather than to disturb the sleep of his favourite. Hence the term *tuan-hsü* "the cut sleeve", has become a literary expression for homosexuality among men.²

¹ This poem has been included by most Western translators of Chinese poetry in their publications, which usually give the impression that Wu-ti was a man of simple and straightforward character, a great soldier whose unique love was for the Lady Li. The above data show that his character was certainly slightly more complicated than that. When translating Oriental verse it is necessary to add a description of the background of each individual poet and his work. Unfortunately, however, until quite recently Western translators of Chinese poetry did not adopt this principle. They published anthologies of Chinese verse, selecting here and there those poems that appealed to Western taste and, even worse, left out lines or passages in the original that did not please them or which they did not understand—a method which sadly distorts the art of the great old Chinese poets, and gives the unwary reader a wholly mistaken idea of Chinese poetry in general. Thus all sorts of misconceptions have arisen among the Western reading public, such as for instance the preposterous notion that the Chinese did not write love poetry—whereas one could easily fill a library with books of Chinese love-poetry, describing all aspects of the subject, from the most elevated spiritual love down to plain pornography. The difference between Chinese and Western poets in their approach to love is mainly one of emphasis; while with us the oeuvre of a great poet nearly always centres round love-themes, with the Chinese love is one of many subjects deemed equally or more fit for being sung in poetry.

The best method of introducing Chinese poetry to the Western public is to incorporate translations in biographical accounts of the artists, describing their career and environment. This method has been adopted successfully by A. Waley in his "The Life and Times of Po Chu-i" (London 1949), his "The Poetry and Career of Li Po" (London 1950), and his "Yüan Mei, eighteenth century Chinese Poet" (London 1956). A. Hoffmann did the same in his excellent study "Die Lieder des Li Yü" (937-978) (Cologne 1950).

² In the 17th century appeared a treatise by an anonymous author which sums up literary data on male homosexuality; it is entitled *Tuan-hsü-pien* "Records of the Cut Sleeve", and reprinted in HYTS, 9th collection, vol. 2. This treatise—as far as I know the only one of its kind—records about fifty notorious cases from Chinese history, with notes and comments.

As to the living circumstances of the people in general, there had been many changes, especially in city life. The foreign trade had acquainted the Chinese with many luxuries, and these were not any longer the exclusive property of the high and mighty; also the prosperous new upper middle class of the bureaucrats and merchants could now afford them. People still sat on the floor, but houses were built better and larger than before. The middle class house had as a rule two storeys, the roof was supported by carved pillars, and the plaster walls were decorated with paintings. Furniture was still limited to low stands and tables, and screens that partitioned off parts of the room took the place of doors. There were no cupboards. Clothes, books etc. were stored away in boxes and baskets, often lacquered and beautifully decorated.¹

Men and women dressed in the same way as before, but the material was more varied in material and colour. The upper part of the robe was fastened with elaborately worked clasps of jade, silver or gold, and the girdles were long strips of silk, the ends of which trailed down to the floor. Men now wore baggy trousers under their robes, a custom probably introduced into China from Central Asia (see Plate II). Women carried broad shawls round their shoulders, and when going outside covered their heads with them. Women had the habit of shaving off their eyebrows (*chiao-mei*), and painting new ones with blue or black ink²—a custom that remained in use till the 12th century. The shape of these painted eyebrows changed with the fashion. In the reign of the Emperor Wu they were shaped like the Chinese character for “eight”, that is like the circumflex accent. But in the next century, at the time of the Imperial Consort Ming-tê (Empress in 77 A.D.), they were very long, curved lines. A street-song (*tung-yao*) of that time ran:

The townladies love high chignons—

Everywhere one sees them one foot high.

The townladies love long eyebrows—

Everywhere one sees them covering half the brow.

The townladies love broad sleeves—

Everywhere one roll of silk is used for them

(text in *Yü-t'ai-hsin-yung*)

¹ Cf. the objects reproduced in “Select Specimens of the remains found in the Tomb of the Painted Basket of Lo-lang”, Heijō (Pyong-yang, in Korea) 1936, text in English and Japanese.

² For more details cf. Friedrich Hirth, “Über Augenbrauen und Brauensminke bei den Chinesen”, in his “Chinesische Studien”, (Leipzig 1890), Band I pp. 243–258. Also Eberhard, LAC pp. 219–220.

Women powdered their face, neck and shoulders, added well-marked red spots of rouge on their cheeks, mouches by the side of their mouth and on their forehead,¹ and they painted their lips with red lip salve. They did up their hair with long needles of ivory, gold or silver, with beautifully worked knobs. They wore ear rings, bracelets and finger rings, often of green jade.

The Emperor, the princes and high officials still kept their own troupes of female musicians, and the Emperor Wu started the institution of female camp followers for his armies; these were called *ying-chi* "camp harlots".

The changed economic situation now gave rise to the public brothel.² On the one hand there was a prosperous merchant class who wanted to amuse themselves, but could not afford to keep their own dancing girls, or perhaps did not dare to do so because the ruling class might consider that an infringement of their privileges. On the other hand the social shifts had broken up many middle class and peasant families so that there were great numbers of abandoned women seeking employment. This situation brought into existence brothels, operated by private individuals on a commercial basis. The houses were called *ch'ang-chia* or *ch'ang-lou* "houses of singing girls", and apparently luxuriously appointed. In the next period they are referred to as *ch'ing-lou* "green bowers", because the woodwork was lacquered green as that of opulent mansions. People bent on pleasure could go there for drinking and eating and

¹ Cf. G. Schlegel's article "Chinese mouches" (in Dutch), in: *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, vol. XIV, Batavia 1864, pp. 569-572. The ordinary mouches, called *hua-tzu* "flowers", were small round patches cut from black paper, but also more ornate, five-coloured ones were used; these can be seen on the faces of the women depicted on Tun-huang paintings.

² Later tradition maintains that commercial brothels originated already in the 7th century B.C., being instituted by the famous statesman and philosopher Kuan I-wu (died 645 B.C.), better known as Kuan Chung. He was adviser of Duke Huan of Ch'i (685-642 B.C.), and is said to have established a great number of public houses of ill fame, as a means for increasing the income of the state. However, none of the Chou sources at my disposal confirm this tradition. The *Chan-kuo-tz'ü* (3rd century B.C.) says on the contrary that it was Duke Huan himself who established within his palace "seven markets with seven hundred houses for women". The word *shih* "market" must mean here a kind of palace fair, for the monarch's own delectation, and there can be no doubt that the women were strictly reserved for him only. For the text goes on to say that the Duke's faithful adviser Kuan Chung thereupon himself took three wives unto him, in order to divert public attention from his master's sexual extravagance; cf. SPTK ed., ch. 2, page 12b. Further, the philosopher Han-fei-tzu says: "Formerly when Duke Huan established in his palace two markets with two hundred houses full of women, and there with hair undone had intercourse with them, he could yet maintain himself as the greatest of the five 'tyrants', as long as he employed Kuan Chung; but when he had lost Kuan Chung, he perished" (SPTK ed., ch. 15, page 8b). And ca. 300 A.D. this version is repeated in *Pao-p'u-tzu*; cf. SPTK edition, vol. 4, ch. 12, page 1a. Thus the older sources mention the "women's fairs" in Duke Huan's palace as a proof of the sexual extravagance of that Duke, and not as public houses of ill fame instituted by Kuan Chung.

have the girls dance and sing for them, and afterwards stay there the night. It does credit to the taste of the Chinese that until the 19th and 20th century brothels where educated men went for sexual intercourse only were rare.

There is a well-known poem of that time that depicts the sorrow of a girl from a brothel who was taken as a concubine by a wealthy loafer, and then deserted. This poem is also interesting because it proves that during the Han dynasty already middle-class men who could afford concubines often purchased them from brothels—as was the regular custom throughout later ages. This poem is translated hereunder.

Green the grass on the river bank,
Dim the willows in the garden
Fully-blown the woman upstairs,
Lustrous her face in the window frame.
Dainty the rouged and powdered cheeks,
Thin and slender the white hands.
She was a girl in a brothel before,
Now she is the wife of a wastrel.
The man has gone, does not return,
The lonely couch is hard to bear

(text in *Yü-t'ai-hsin-yung*)

A number of love poems ascribed to this period survive, but it is difficult to assign them a definite date; some may be archaizing products by later writers. Many sing the sorrows of separation. Military officials often were absent from their homes for protracted periods, while the new civil service implied that officials were posted for certain periods in various places in the provinces. Many could not afford to take their wives and families with them, and usually left them in their native place, under the supervision of the principal wife, taking with them only one or two concubines. This custom persisted throughout later centuries, and the resulting emotional conflicts are often described in T'ang, Sung and later stories and novels.¹

¹ Similar problems presented themselves in the last years of the Manchu Empire when the Chinese Imperial government in its attempts at modernization wanted to organize a diplomatic service. The Chinese knew that their ambassadors and ministers abroad ought to be accompanied by their wives, but the old-fashioned principal wives of high Chinese dignitaries knew no foreign languages and were wholly unacquainted with Western ways of life, and the same applied to their secondary wives and concubines. Thus many a Chinese diplomat of those days went in despair to the port-cities and selected there a singing girl with a smattering of foreign ways, to be taken along as special concubine to a foreign capital and there presented as his one and only wife. The complications

While city life changed, the life of the landed gentry and the peasants remained very much the same. The Dynastic History of the Former Han Dynasty gives a description of the simple pleasures of a squire ca. 50 B.C., in his own words. It occurs in the biography of Yang Yün (*op. cit.* ch. 66), an officer at the court who had fallen into disgrace and retired to his country seat. He is quoted as saying:

When I, now a squire, am through with my work, summer or winter when the season is right, I roast me a sheep or bake a lamb, draw a pint of wine and there-with console myself. I am a native of Ch'in and I am familiar with the music of that state, my wife is from Chao and she plays the zither very well. And I have a few slave girls and maids who can sing. When the wine has reddened my ears, I look up at Heaven and, beating the measure on an earthen jar I start shouting 'woo woo'. Then I sing this song:

The field on the southern slope
Is overgrown by weeds and grasses,
If one plants beans there
There will be tangled stalks.¹
But for enjoying this brief life,
Why strive for wealth and honour?

On such a day I straighten my robe and I am happy. Swinging my sleeves I rock my head, tapping my feet I start to dance. And who shall say that such untrammelled amusement is not seemly?

The strict rules on the separation of the sexes propagated by the Confucianists had not yet had time to influence the daily life of the people. Contemporary literature shows that men and women had much opportunity for meeting each other, and that sexual matters were freely talked and written about. The career of the famous poet Szû-ma Hsiang-ju (died 117 B.C.) offers a good example of life and manners of that time.

Szû-ma Hsiang-ju was a native of Chengtu in Szuchuan Province, a romantic youth fond of books, sword fighting and women. He became a small official at the court of a Prince, but fell in disgrace. Then he wandered home and stayed for a while with the prefect of Lin-chiung. The prefect took him to a banquet given by a wealthy man, and while they were drinking and singing

that sometimes ensued are easily imagined. Soon, however, they changed this policy, and took with them their principal wives, who though not knowing foreign languages, made an excellent impression in the diplomatic milieu by the dignified and self-possessed behaviour that comes naturally to Chinese ladies of distinction.

¹ This song alludes to Yang Yün's falling into disgrace at court through being slandered by corrupt officials. The field overgrown with weeds means the Imperial court (southern slope) where corrupt officials (weeds) hold sway. If honest men (beans) protest against misrule and favouritism, they are bound to become involved in malicious intrigues (tangled stalks).

the host's daughter, a young widow called Wên-chün, saw the poet from behind the screen, fell in love with him and that same night eloped with him. They went to Szuchuan, but having no money they returned to Lin-chiung, where they opened a wine shop, Wên-chün serving the guests and her husband dressed like a coolie doing the rough work. Her father-in-law could not bear this disgrace to the family, and gave them a large sum of money so that they could set up a real household in Szû-ma Hsiang-ju's native Chengtu. Later he was again appointed at court.

Among the few literary works of Szû-ma Hsiang-ju that survive is the poetical essay called *Mei-jên-fu* "On a Beautiful Woman". In the preface he says that the prince reproached him for being a lascivious fellow; much given over to female beauty. Szû-ma Hsiang-ju answered that he was much more continent in sexual matters than the Confucianists; for they refuse to attend a party when female entertainers are present, and they run away as soon as they hear the sound of song and laughter. They can not prove that they are not licentious, for the simple reason that they avoid all temptation. He, on the other hand, while still a bachelor lived for three years next door to a charming girl who did her utmost to seduce him, even climbing on the wall to gaze longingly at him, but he never as much as spoke to her. So he considers himself as much more continent than the bigotted Confucianists.¹ At the same time, however, he points out that abstention from sexual intercourse is unhealthy. He then relates that once, in winter, he passed a large beautiful house that seemed deserted. He went inside and there saw

A lovely girl alone in her room, reclining on a couch, a strange flower of unsurpassed elegance, of gentle nature but of luscious appearance. When she saw me hesitating she said with a soft smile: 'Of what country is the honourable guest, I suppose he comes from afar?' She prepared excellent wine and took out a lute. I struck the strings and played the tunes 'Dark Orchid' (Yu-lan) and 'White Snow' (Po-hsüeh).² The girl then sang the song:

All alone in the bedroom, it seems unbearably lonely,
Thinking of a handsome man, my emotions hurt me.
Why did this charming person tarry in coming?

¹ He borrows this idea from a famous prose-essay by the 3rd century poet Sung Yü. When Sung Yü was denounced before the King as a licentious man by the counsellor Têng-t'u, he pointed out that he had been living three years next door to a beautiful girl without once responding to her advances. Sung Yü contrasts his own behaviour with that of his accuser Têng-t'u who although married to an ugly and misshapen wife, yet had five children by her.

² For details about the tune *Yu-lan* cf. my book "The Lore of the Chinese Lute, an Essay in Ch'in Ideology", Monumenta Nipponica Monographs, Tōkyō 1940, page 27. For *Po-hsüeh* cf. my book "Hsi K'ang and his Poetical Essay on the Lute", Monumenta Nipponica Monographs, Tōkyō 1941, page 58.

Time runs out fast, the flower will wither—
I entrust my body to you, for eternal love¹

She stuck one of her hairpins in the hair under my cap, her silk sleeves brushed past my robe. Then the sun was setting in the west, and darkness filled the room with its shadows. There was a cold breeze outside, and the snow came down in floating flakes. But the bedroom was quiet and close, one did not hear a single sound. Then she had made the bedstead ready, provided with the rarest luxuries, including a bronze censer for scenting the quilts. She let down the bed curtains to the floor. The mattresses and coverlets were piled up, the pointed pillows lay across them. She then shed her upper robe and took off her undergarment revealing her white body, with thin bones and soft flesh. When then we made love with each other her body was soft and moist like ointment. Thereafter the blood in my veins had settled, and my heart had become steadied in my bosom.

Next to its literary importance—it is one of the earliest examples of consciously-erotic prose—this essay is instructive also in other respects. It shows that in this time the strict Confucianist rules on sexual relations were derided—which did not fail to rouse the ire of later Confucianist writers. A Sung editor remarks sourly: “Szû-ma Hsiang-ju had naturally the vice of lechery,¹ in this poem he criticises himself for this vice, but in the end he perished by it . . . Is this not a warning example?” (cf. *Ku-wên-yüan*, Sung edition reprinted in SPTK, ch. 3, page 12). The essay further supplies precious data about the bedstead of that time. The bed-censer, *tsa*, was a bronze box with an open-work lid which contained some glowing coals in the lower compartment, and powdered incense in the upper; it served to scent the quilts and at the same time for warming them. Later critics are not agreed on the exact meaning of *chüeh-chên* “horned pillows”; most assume that they were shaped like a half-moon, with pointed ends like a pair of cow horns. It is worth noticing that the sexual act is referred to openly, although it is indicated rather modestly by the one word *ch'in* “to be intimate”—by a curious coincidence exactly the same word as currently used in English legal language.

For our present subject, however, the last two lines translated are the most important. “To settle (the blood in) the veins”, *t'ing-mê*, is mentioned frequently in later literature to describe the beneficial effect of the sexual act; a synonym is *t'ing-ch'ing* “to settle the passion”. The ancient Chinese recognized that, apart from other advantages, the completion of the sexual act regulates the blood circulation and relaxes the nervous system.

¹ Szû-ma Hsiang-ju's biography says that he suffered from ‘the disease of thirst’, *hsiao-k'o-chi*, which later editors explained as excessive lasciviousness; hence I translated *chi* as “vice”. But evidently he suffered from some variety of diabetes.

This is a train of thought where Confucianism and Taoism meet. It brings us to the subject of the handbooks of sex, and the Taoist attitude to sexual relations.

In this time illustrated manuals of sexual relations were widely used. These books were intended as guides for the householder, serious handbooks totally lacking in frivolity. They taught how a man could live long and happily by maintaining harmonious sex relations with his women, and obtain healthy offspring from them. At the same time Taoist students of the art of prolonging life used these books as guides for their sexual disciplines.

As most Dynastic Histories, also that of the Former Han Dynasty contains a bibliographical section which lists the titles of the most important books in circulation, classified according to their content. The Former Han bibliography begins with a section on classical books, and thereafter runs through the entire field of contemporary learning, till after the section on medicine we find the category *fang-chung*, literally "inside the bedchamber", and meaning "The Art of the Bedchamber" (other terms are *fang-nei* "inside the bedroom", *fang-chung-shu* "the art of the bedroom", and *fang-shih* "the affair of the bedroom"). Here there are listed eight works, together comprising 86 manuscript rolls. It should be noted that at that time books were written on long, horizontal strips of paper or silk; one roll contained usually one chapter of a literary work. The eight books are listed as follows:

1. *Jung-ch'êng-yin-tao* "Sex handbook of Master Jung-ch'êng", 26 rolls.
2. *Wu-ch'êng-tzû-yin-tao* "Sex handbook of Master Wu-ch'êng", 36 rolls.
3. *Yao-shun-yin-tao* "Sex handbook of the Emperors Yao and Shun", 23 rolls.
4. *T'ang-pan-kêng-yin-tao* "Sex handbook of King T'ang and Pan Kêng", 20 rolls.
5. *T'ien-lao-tsa-tzû-yin-tao* "Sex handbook of T'ien-lao and others", 25 rolls.
6. *T'ien-i-yin-tao* "Sex handbook of T'ien-i", 24 rolls.
7. *Huang-ti-san-wang-yang-yang-fang* "Recipes for nursing potency, by Huang-ti and the Three Kings", 20 rolls.
8. *San-chia-nei-fang-yu-tzû-fang* "Recipes for the Bedchamber and the obtaining of Offspring", of the Three Schools", 17 rolls.

At the end of this list the editor added the following note:

The Art of the Bedchamber constitutes the climax of human emotions, it encompasses the Supreme Way (Tao). Therefore the Saint Kings of antiquity regulated man's outer pleasures in order to restrain his inner passions and made detailed rules for sexual intercourse. An old record says: 'The ancients created sexual pleasure thereby to regulate all human affairs'. If one regulates his sexual pleasure he will feel at peace and attain a high age. If, on the other hand, one abandons himself to its

pleasure disregarding the rules set forth in the abovementioned treatises one will fall ill and harm one's very life.

None of the books mentioned has been preserved. However, their titles and the names of the authors supply clues to their contents.

In the first place, it must be noted that items 1-6 use the term *yin-tao* "dark, hidden way", to denote the rules for sexual intercourse. In later times the term *yin* is used exclusively for "female" and the female generative organs, but it seems that originally it was employed for both male and female parts, and corresponded to our adjective "sexual"; a typical example is the term *yin-wei* "withering of the potency", applied to Prince Tuan mentioned above. *Tao*, literally "way", here means "principles, doctrine". Thus *yin-tao* in these book titles means "Principles of sexual life".

Historical records give some instructive details about Master Jung-ch'êng, the author of the first item. The Dynastic History of the Later Han period (*Hou-han-shu*) gives in the second section of chapter 112 the biography of a magician called Kan Shih and two others who "all excelled in practising the art of sexual intercourse with women (as taught by) Jung-ch'êng"; the commentary states that all these three lived to an advanced age, and always looked like young men. The same chapter of the *Hou-han-shu* contains the biography of the famous physician Hua T'o, who flourished ca. 200 A.D. At the end of this biography is added a note on three Taoist masters who were Hua T'o's contemporaries. About one of them, named Lêng Shou-kuang, this text says: "He lived to the age of over 150 years by practising the art of having sexual intercourse with women, as taught by Jung-ch'êng". The commentary on this passages quotes a book called *Lieh-hsien-chuan* "Biographies of Immortals":¹

Master Jung-ch'êng was adept at nurturing and controlling (his physical functions). He absorbed (new) semen from the Mysterious Vagina (literally: vale). The main point of this art is to prevent the Spirit of the Vale (i.e. one's potency) from dying by preserving one's vital essence and by nurturing his vital force (*ch'i*). Then one's grey hair will turn black again and new teeth will replace those that have fallen out. This art of having sexual intercourse with women consists of restraining oneself so as not to ejaculate, thus making the semen return and strengthen the brain.

As was discussed in Chapter II already, this passage states the fundamental Chinese idea of the meaning of the sexual act.

¹ The text of this work as we have it now has been expurgated, and the line about having intercourse with women has disappeared. Cf. M. Kaltenmark, "Le Lie-sien Tchouan, traduit et annoté", Publications du Centre d'Etudes sinologiques de Pékin, Peking 1953, pp. 55-56.

Master Wu-ch'êng, mentioned as the author of item 2, is said to have been the teacher of the legendary Emperor Yao. It is this Emperor and his successor Shun who are given as the authors of item 3.

Item 4 has as authors T'ang and Pan Kêng, two Kings of the Yin dynasty.

T'ien-lao, the alleged author of item 5, is said to have been the teacher of the mythical Yellow Emperor, Huang-ti.

Item 6 mentions T'ien-i, a stellar deity, described in Han literature as presiding over *yin-tê*, which means both "magical sexual power" (cf. our discussion of the term *nü-tê* on page 12 above), and "merit acquired after death"; in this case of course the first meaning applies.

The titles of items 7 and 8 are self-explanatory. The Three Kings of item 7 are presumably the three Saint-Kings who founded the Hsia, Yin and Chou dynasties. The meaning of *san-chia* "three schools" is unknown.

The above proves that during the Former Han Dynasty there circulated handbooks of sex that constituted a special branch of medical literature. We shall now see in how far data of the Later Han period shed further light on the content and the use of those handbooks.

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CHAPTER FOUR

LATER HAN DYNASTY

25-220 A.D.

In the literature of the Later Han Dynasty we find three passages which supply additional information on the contents of the handbooks of sex, and the way they were used.

The first passage I shall discuss occurs in the *T'ung-shêng-ko*, a fine Epithalamium written by the well known Han poet Chang Hêng (78-139 A.D.). This poem in which the bride addresses her husband is translated in full below.

Having obtained the good opportunity of meeting you,
I have now entered your women's quarters.
Although my love hankers after our first union,
I am fearful as though about to touch boiling water.
I have no talents but I shall exhaust my abilities,
So as to acquit myself of a consort's duties:
I shall take good care in supervising the proviant,
And reverently I shall assist in the ancestral sacrifices.
In my thought I long to be changed into your bedmat,
So as to act as a cover for your square couch.
I wish to be changed into a silken coverlet and canopy,
So as to protect you from draughts and cold.
I have swept clean the pillow and the bedmat,
And I have filled the burner with rare incense.
Let us now lock the double door with its golden lock,
And light the lamp to fill our room with its brilliance.
I shed my robes and remove my paint and powder,
And roll out the picture scroll by the pillow's side.
The Plain Girl I shall take as my instructress,
So that we can practise all the variegated postures,
Those that an ordinary husband has but rarely seen,
Such as taught by T'ien-lao to the Yellow Emperor.
No joy shall equal the delights of this first night,
These shall never be forgotten, however old we may grow.

Here we see that the bride mentions the handbook of sex mentioned in the Former Han bibliography under item 5, and shows that it was evidently written in the form of a dialogue between T'ien-lao and his pupil, the Yellow Emperor. As a matter of fact most old books on medical subjects were written in this form, the Yellow Emperor asking the questions and one of his teachers supplying the answers.

Su-nü, the "Plain Girl", is one of the guardians of the arcana of sex, who always figures in the handbooks of the 6th and later centuries. The text here evidently refers to the *Su-nü-ching* "The Handbook of Sex of the Plain Girl", not listed in the Former Han bibliography, but mentioned in a text of 300 A.D., as we shall see below. About this Su-nü we only know that prior to the Han period she was described as a goddess of Huang-ti's time, skilled in music. When the Yellow Emperor heard her play a zither with fifty strings, he became so moved that he decided that this instrument was too dangerous for man, and had it split up in two smaller zithers, of 25 strings each. The oldest reference to Su-nü in literature seems to date from the first century B.C.; it occurs in the poem *Chiu-huai* by the great poet Wang Pao (died 61 B.C.), who calls her an excellent singer (cf. *Ch'u-tz'ü*, SPTK edition, vol. 5, ch. 15, p. 7a). Su-nü is also mentioned in the commentary on the *Shan-hai-ching*, the Book of Mountains and Rivers, which generally gives material of the Chou period. Ch. 18 describes the place where Hou-chi, the God of the Grain, was buried, as a kind of paradise where "the hundred kinds of grain grow of their own account, where the soil is fertile both summer and winter, and where the Phoenix Birds sing and dance" (SPTK ed., vol. 2, p. 85a). The commentary adds: "This is the centre of the realm, here Su-nü was born". This means that Su-nü was connected with the fertility-cult of Hou-chi. For another tradition links Su-nü with the fertility cult of rivers and lakes which has always occupied an important place in popular religion, especially in South China. The *Sou-shên-chi*,¹ an anonymous work on supernatural beings which utilizes old local traditions, describes Su-nü as a river-goddess, called *Po-shui-su-nü* "The Plain Girl of the White River", who takes the shape of a shell;² and the shell is one of the oldest Chinese fertility symbols, presumably because of its resemblance to the vulva. Chapter 6 tells the story of a man from Fukien Province called Hsieh Tuan, poor but virtuous, who lived all alone on the river bank. Once he found there a large shell, shaped like a bushel. It took his

¹ Published in 1573 by the well-known Ming bibliophile T'ang Fu-ch'un; cf. the detailed description of this rare illustrated blockprint in: J. P. Dubosc, "Exposition d'ouvrages illustrés de la Dynastie Ming", Peking 1944, p. 6. This work should not be confused with the *Sou-shên-chi* of Kan Pao, of the 4th century A.D.

² Other stories about shells changing into women are given by J. J. M. de Groot, in his "Religious System of China", vol. IV book II, Leyden 1901, p. 242.

fancy and he brought it home with him, where he put the shell in a large jar. Thereafter he found that everytime when he went out, having locked the door behind him, the house was cleaned and food prepared. The village-elders remarked that he must be harbouring some supernatural being, and Hsieh at once thought of the shell. He went out but came back secretly and watched. Then he saw a beautiful young girl emerge from the jar wherein he had put the shell. When he questioned her she said: "I am Su-nü of the White River. The Heavenly Emperor sent me to look after you. Now that you have seen me I must go, but I shall leave the shell behind". She then disappeared. Hsieh used the shell for storing his rice, and found that it never became empty.

The handbook of sex called after Su-nü, the *Su-nü-ching*, is referred to in the *Lieh-hsien-chuan*, a collection of biographies of Immortals, traditionally ascribed to Liu Hsiang (77-6 B.C.), but generally considered as dating from the 2nd-3rd century A.D.¹ The 63rd biography is that of a woman called Nü Ch'í who became an Immortal by studying Su-nü's handbook—in this text referred to by the abbreviated title *Su-shu* "The Book of Su(-nü)". It says:

Nü Ch'í was a woman selling wine on the market in Ch'ên (i.e. Huai-yang). Her wine was of excellent quality. Once an Immortal happened to visit her shop and drank wine. As a security (for future payment) he left with her the Book of the Plain Girl, in five chapters. When the woman opened and read the book, she found that it contained the art of nurturing nature and of sexual intercourse. She secretly copied out the important parts, then prepared a special bedroom (in her shop). Thereafter she would there let handsome young men drink good wine, and let them stay the night there with her, so that she could practise with them the art described in the book. When she had done so during thirty years, she looked younger still, as if she were only twenty. Several years later the Immortal came back. He said smiling to the woman: "To steal Tao studying it without a master is like having wings and still not be able to fly!" Thereupon she left the shop and went away with the Immortal, no one knows where.

Here it may be added that Su-nü is but one of a trio. The handbooks of sex mention also two other women who teach the arcana of sex, viz. *Hsüan-nü* the "Dark Girl" and *Ts'ai-nü* the "Elected Girl". The Dark Girl is described as a teacher of the Yellow Emperor, who i.a. made magic drums for him when he was about to slay a monster. Because of this old myth she is mentioned as the authoress of three books on military strategy, namely the *Hsüan-nü-chan-ching*. "Hsüan-nü on War", in one book roll; *Huang-ti-wên-hsüan-nü-ping-fa*. "The Yellow Emperor's Questions to the Dark Girl about Military Strategy", in four book rolls, and *Hsüan-nü-ching-yao-fa* "The most important methods from the book of Hsüan-nü", in one book

¹ Cf. Kaltenmark's excellent critical translation mentioned on page 71, note 1. He points out on p. 181 that Nü Ch'í is correct, and the varia lectio Nü Wan erroneous.

roll. This information is given in CSK, section *Shang-ku-san-tai*, ch. 16, page 9b, and thereafter some fragments of the second book on military strategy are reproduced. From these it would appear that it was really a book on military art, and not a handbook of sex written in military terminology; as mentioned on p. 157 below, Chinese literature often refers to sexual congress as a "battle", and we shall see in Chapter X that later sexological and erotic books worked out the details of the coitus as military moves on the battlefield. The first and third item may refer to a text of this character. The same source also states that Hsüan-nü is sometimes identified with Hsi-wang-mu, the Taoist goddess presiding over the Western Paradise where the Peach of Immortality grows, and whose cult was popular during the Former Han Dynasty.¹

The Elected Girl is also a nebulous figure. During the Han dynasty the term *ts'ai-nü* is applied to a lower class of court ladies; *ts'ai* is also written with the 120th radical, meaning "of variegated colour". Hence this name might have been chosen because it contrasts with that of *Su-nü*, the "Plain Girl". The later handbooks of sex describe her too as a goddess of the time of the Yellow Emperor.

After this digression we return to Chang Hêng's Epithalamium. This poem proves that the handbooks were illustrated with pictures which showed the various positions in which the sexual act can be consummated, and also that these books apparently formed part of the bride's trousseau. It may be added that in Japan it was till well into the 19th century the custom that parents gave their daughter on the eve of her wedding a set of such pictures, in order to prepare her for her conjugal duties.

Chang Hêng again refers to such pictures in another composition of his, entitled *Ch'i-pien*; what survives of this text is reprinted in CSK, section *Houhan*, ch. 55, pages 10a-11b. It says that "Master Not-doing" (*wu-wei*), an austere mountain recluse, was once visited by seven other sages who tested him by each in his turn describing one aspect of worldly pleasure. The first described the delights of a beautiful dwelling place, the second those of taste and flavour, the third those of music. Then the fourth spoke up:

There is a girl, a worthy companion of Hsi-shih,²
Tall and of handsome appearance,
With a soft and finely-chiselled face,
Full of languorous charm.
Her figure as faultless as a sculpted statue,

¹ Cf. H. H. Dubs, "The History of the Former Han Dynasty", Translation vol. III, Baltimore 1955, page 8.

² Hsi-shih (BD no. 679) was a famous beauty of the fifth century B.C.

Waist as thin as a roll of silk,
 With a neck long and white as a tree-grub¹
 Of extreme elegance and wholly fascinating,
 Of gentle nature and modest behaviour
 Yet of luxurious and alluring beauty.
 With jet-black hair done up in a chignon
 So shining that it could serve as a mirror,
 With a mouche that stresses her winning smile,
 With clear eyes, their moist gaze limpid.
 With white teeth and red lips
 And her body a dazzling white colour—
 When then the red flower shows its beauty
 And exhales its heady perfume,
 While she is staying with you in the night
 And you feast and sport with her,
 Pointing at the pictures you observe their sequence,
 While she keeps being bashful and ashamed
 And coyly protests—
 Such are the delights of carnal love.
 Why don't you go back to the world and enjoy those?

Again we see that such illustrated handbooks of sex were kept by the bed side, consulted while making love, and used to encourage bashful partners. This poem also gives a good idea of the ideals of womanly beauty of that time.

The third passage referring to the handbooks of sex occurs in a poetical essay written by the Han scholar Pien Jang, famous for his elegant tastes; he died ca. 200 A.D. It is entitled *Chang-hua-fu* and deals with the delights of visiting dancing girls. The text has been preserved in Pien Jang's biography in ch. 110 of the Dynastic History of the Later Han period, and is also reprinted in CSK, section Hou-han, ch. 84, pages 11b–12a. Pien Jang first depicts in detail the dances performed. Then, when the dancing is finished and the music ceases, one accompanies the girls to their own room:

He retires to a spacious tower, cooled by the breeze, and there practises
 the important methods of the Yellow Emperor. He takes the tender hand of
 a girl beautiful like Hsi-shih, and the white arm of another one like Mao-shih.²
 Their bodies are beautiful, supple like grass moving in the wind, they put forth
 all their charms so that one forgets life and death. Then, when the bright morn-
 ing dawns, etc.

¹ Cf. the same image used in the Book of Odes, as quoted on page 18 above.

² Mao-shih is mentioned in the philosophical text *Chuang-tzû* as a paragon of feminine beauty.

The commentary on this passage observes:

The Yellow Emperor learned the Art of the Bedchamber from the Dark Girl. It consists of suppressing emissions, absorbing the woman's fluid, and making the semen return to strengthen the brain, thereby to obtain longevity.

The above data admit of the following conclusions, (1) During the Han period there existed a number of handbooks of sexual relations, written in the form of dialogues between the Yellow Emperor and one of his teachers, or one of the Instructresses on Sex. (2) These handbooks were illustrated with pictures showing the various positions of the sexual act. (3) These handbooks were well known and the methods given by them widely practised, both by the husband and his wives (they formed part of the bride's trousseau), and by men associating with dancing girls. (4) These books taught not only to men and women how to maintain mutually satisfactory sexual relations, but also to the man how he could benefit his health and prolong his life by exercising the coitus reservatus.

Although the underlying thought of the handbooks was in the main Taoist, also the Confucianists approved of the principles set forth therein—with the understanding of course that these principles were applied only and exclusively inside the bedchamber. The difference between the two schools in their attitude to this subject was only a matter of emphasis, the Confucianists stressing eugenics and the obtaining of offspring, the Taoists stressing the sexual disciplines for prolonging life and for obtaining the Elixir of Immortality.

That during the Han dynasty the Confucianists approved of the basic principles of the handbooks of sex is attested by an instructive passage in the *Po-hu-t'ung*. This book is the record of discussions on the Classics held in the year 79 A.D. under Imperial auspices in the "White Tiger Hall", in the Han capital.¹ The results of the discussions are recorded in the form of questions and answers. The last passage of the section on marriage reads:

Why does a man after having reached his sixtieth year abstain from sexual intercourse? Because then he needs to nurture his growing weakness, and abstinence then means that he treasures his life. The *Li-chi* says: 'As long as a concubine has not yet reached the age of fifty, the husband shall copulate with her once every five days' (see page 60 above). This is also in order that he may help her growing weakness. When a man has reached the age of seventy, this is the time of great debility. He can eat his fill only on meat, and if he sleeps alone he can not be warm. Therefore at that age he again starts having sexual intercourse.

(*Po-hu-t'ung*, SPTK edition, ch. 9 page 16b)

¹ This book has been partially translated by Tjan Tjoe-som, under the title "Po-hu-t'ung, the Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall", *Sinica Leidensia* vol. VI, Leiden 1949. A carefully annotated translation of the entire chapter on Marriage will be found in vol. I, pp. 244-263.

The implication of the last line becomes clear in the light of the teachings of the handbooks of sex. Aged men need to supplement their failing vital power by means of the *yin* essence obtained from women through the sexual act.

While, at least at that time, the Confucianists approved, there were also expressed dissenting views. In Han literature the Art of the Bedchamber is on occasion also referred to as *hsieh-chiao* "The Perverse Doctrine", for instance by the philosopher Wang Ch'ung (27-97 A.D.) who says in his *Lun-hêng*:

The Plain Girl (Su-nü) explained to the Yellow Emperor the art of sexual intercourse as exposed by the Five Girls. This art not only harms the body, but also infringes on the nature of man and woman.

The word "five" in the text is probably a scribe's error for "three", for nowhere else the number of the Instructresses on sex is given as five, the trio regularly mentioned being Su-nü, Hsüan-nü and Ts'ai-nü.

Here we must dwell a moment in greater detail on the Taoist disciplines for prolonging life that were briefly mentioned already in Chapter II, on page 43 above.

The Confucianists strived after biological immortality, they believed in man surviving in his offspring. Hence the classical texts say that a marriage is not an occasion for rejoicing in the house of the newly-weds, during three days no music is performed there. For it reminds the groom's father that the time is coming near of his son succeeding him (cf. p. 304 below). The Taoists, on the other hand, aimed at physical immortality, at lengthening one's individual span of years in this world.

The Taoists believed that this aim could be reached by various disciplines, the oldest and most important of which consisted of breathing exercises. They tried to acquire the art of "womb-breathing", *t'ai-hsi*, i.e., the breathing of an embryo in the mother's womb. Further they engaged in dietetics, heliotherapy and gymnastics.¹

While these disciplines for making the body everlasting and not subject to decay presupposed long and strenuous exercises, there was among the Taoists also a school that believed in the possibility of an easier way to immortality, namely by partaking of the Elixir of Life. Most of the Han Emperors adhered to this line of thought. The elixir was called *chin-tan* "the gold-cinnabar pill", a term referring to the distilling of the "gold"—in fact mercury—from a mixture of cinnabar, lead and sulphur. Their main equipment for conducting these alchemistic experiments was a crucible (*ting*) wherein the component parts of the mixture were heated over a stove (*lu*). In order to attain success in these experiments one had to know the exact composition

¹ All these techniques have been described in detail by H. Maspero in his excellent study "Le Taoïsme" (Mélanges Posthumes sur les Religions et l'histoire de la Chine), publ. Musée Guimet, Paris 1950. J. Needham has described those disciplines in the light of modern science, in SCC, vol. II (Cambridge 1956), p. 143 sq.

of the lead and cinnabar, and to observe the correct firing time (*huo-hou*).

Now the Taoist alchemists—just as their Western colleagues—considered their experiments aimed at obtaining the Elixir of Life (c.q. gold) as an exact parallel to the sexual disciplines aimed at reaching immortality. This is only logical, since both processes were viewed as special aspects of the general, cosmic process of procreation. The alchemists identified woman in her function of “a vessel of transmutation” with the crucible, her red vital essence (i.e. ova) with the cinnabar, man’s white semen with the lead, the coitus with the mixing of the alchemistic ingredients, and the technique of the coitus with the firing times.¹

This parallel supplies the key to the understanding of the famous Chinese classic of alchemy, the *Ts’an-t’ung-ch’i*, “Pact of the Triple Equation”. This treatise, consisting of 90 chapters, is said to have been written ca. 150 A.D. by the Taoist adept Wei Po-yang. There the extracting of the mercury from the cinnabar and lead is discussed parallel with the sexual act, and against a general philosophical background of the working of the universe as expressed in the Five Elements theory, and the triagrams and hexagrams of the *I-ching*.

In later times when, as a consequence of Confucianist suppression, the handbooks of sex had been relegated to obscurity, the sexual references in this and similar texts on alchemy were no longer understood, or explained away. In the 12th century, for instance, the great exponent of Neo-Confucianism Chu Hsi edited the *Ts’an-t’ung-ch’i* with a learned commentary, and praised it as an important textbook on the philosophy of the *I-ching*—without realizing, or perhaps refusing to realize, the sexual implications.² We shall

¹ For Western medieval parallels see Mircea Eliade’s brilliant book “Forgerons et Alchimistes”, Paris 1956.

² Chu Hsi’s edition bears the title *Chou-i-ts’an-t’ung-ch’i-k’ao-i*. I used the fine Japanese official reprint (*kampan*) published by the Tokugawa Confucianist Academy at Edo in 1802.

In the course of the centuries an extensive special literature on the *Ts’an-t’ung-ch’i* has come into existence. As long as this literature has not yet been sifted and compared with other old and later Chinese treatises on alchemy, attempts at translating this treatise must remain futile. A premature attempt was made by Tenney L. Davis and Wu Lu-ch’iang. “An ancient Chinese treatise on alchemy entitled *Ts’an T’ung Ch’i*”, published in vol. XVIII of the periodical “*Isis*” (1932, pp. 210–289). Davis added a good introduction and instructive notes which cite parallel passages from Western alchemistic treatises, but the body of the article, viz. Wu’s English version of the text, does not answer the minimum requirements of a serious translation. It is a literal, word-by-word rendering, apparently prepared without the aid of elementary Chinese books of reference; quotations have not been identified (with the exception of one from the Book of Odes), Taoist terms are either left unexplained or rendered wrongly (e.g. p. 250, *fang-chu* “the shelled creature”; should be: “basin for collecting dew”), and the text is arbitrarily divided into chapters and sections. As it stands this English version is of small use, and moreover makes the book seem far more obscure than it really is. I have been working on this text for some time, and hope in the future to publish a better-documented translation. As far as I can see now, the best edition is the one published in 947 A.D. by P’eng Hsiao,

see below that similar mistakes in interpretation did often occur in the case of sexological texts which borrowed their terminology from military science, and hence were thought to be genuine manuals of strategy and the arts of war.

Since in the *Ts'an-t'ung-ch'i* the descriptions of the alchemistic *opus* and of sexual congress constantly merge and overlap, most passages can be rendered adequately only by a double translation, namely one version that interprets the text in its alchemistic sense, and a second that gives the sexual meaning. To many passages even a third translation should be added, in order to render the implied philosophical significance regarding the cosmic order and one of its aspects, viz. good government.

Here I translate only a few chapters which are clear without lengthy explanation.

Chapter 67 is a general statement, applicable to alchemy, sexual intercourse, and government. To achieve success in these three is not difficult, provided one follows the correct method. But the common people consider this method as based on acquired skill, they do not recognize the deep meaning, and hence they fail. As regards sexual intercourse, we shall see below that later the philosopher Pao-p'u-tzû voiced a similar warning.

The people of the present love trifling technical skills, they do not examine the profundity of Tao, they abandon the right and follow the false. They want to arrive at the goal quickly and thus find their path obstructed. They are as blind men without a walking-stick, or as deaf persons listening to music; or again as persons who dive under water to catch pheasants and hares, and climb mountains to catch fish and other water animals. Or as those who sow wheat in order to reap millet, or use a pair of compasses in order to draw a square. They exhaust their forces and tire their spirit, never attaining success in their entire life. And yet those who (really) desire to know the method of partaking of 'the medicine', will find it simple and easy to put into practice.

Chapters 62, 63 and 64 describe the sexual union, conception and birth simultaneously with the alchemistic *opus*. Here I translate them according to their sexual sense.

He who wants to nurture his nature and to prolong his life by abolishing the term (set to his years), must while meditating on the ultimate aim, also think deeply about his own origin. The body we have been endowed with is originally one not-being. It is the Original Semen stirring like spreading clouds that gives the vital essence (*ch'i*) a concrete beginning.

under the title *Chou-i-ts'an-t'ung-ch'i t'ung-chên-i*; it was published in the Taoist Canon, and in 1924 reprinted in the *Hsü-chün-hua-ts'ung-shu*. P'êng lived in the Kingdom of Shu in West China, and before Neo-Confucianist puritanism had won the day. My translations refer to that edition, including the chapter-numbers.

If *yin* and *yang* are balanced, the *hun* and *p'o* souls¹ obtain a place (to merge). The spirit *yang* is the *hun*-soul of the sun, the spirit of *yin* is the *p'o*-soul of the moon. If *hun* and *p'o* come together in mutual cooperation, they will constitute 'the house' (i.e. the appropriate situation for conception). Man's nature is regulated from within, it develops a definite shape, Man's passion is regulated by outside factors, it creates the walls of the house (i.e. carnal desire creates the proper situation for the sexual union). If these walls have been established, the two partners (literally: the people) can safely proceed. Then passion accomplishes the union of *ch'ien* (the first triagram: 'heaven' and 'man') and *k'un* (the second triagram: 'earth' and 'woman'). *Ch'ien* (the man) moves and is strong, his *ch'i* (vital essence) spreads out and his semen is stirred. *K'un* (the woman) remains still and harmonious, she constitutes (her womb) a haven for Tao (i.e. the process of procreation). When 'hard' has shed (its semen), 'soft' dissolves into moisture. Nine times returning, seven times resuming, eight times coming back, six times remaining (inside). The man is white, the woman is red. When thus (the climax has been reached and) the element metal has been blended with the element fire, the element water will extinguish the fire (i.e. the woman will have stilled the man's passion); this blending constitutes the first link in the sequence of the Five Elements (i.e. the foundation is laid for the complete embryo, which embodies all the Five Elements). (Thus the role played by the woman can be compared to) the Supreme Goodness (which) is as water (quoted from the *Tao-tê-ching*, ch. 8), limpid and unpolluted.

Of the embodiment of Tao, the True One-ness (i.e. the conception) is difficult to depict. After this transmutation the couple separates, and each stands apart again.

(The embryo is) as the hen's egg, dark (the yolk) and white are perfectly welded together. Thus within one square inch, the beginning is made. The four limbs and the five viscera, the sinews and bones now take form. In the tenth month the embryo emerges from the womb. The bones are then still so soft that they can be bent, the flesh is smooth like lead.

We shall see below that the handbooks of sex attach great importance to the correct number and correct rhythm of the strokes used by the man during the coitus. In the instructions given there the odd, 'male' numbers 3, 7 and 9, and the even, 'female' numbers 4, 6 and 8 occupy an important place. I further draw attention to the statement that during the orgasm the man is described as *white*, and the woman as *red* (*ch'ih*); cf. the remarks on page 7 above. "The square inch" is widely used in later erotic literature for designating the female pudenda, for instance in the well-known couplet: "Is it not strange that from olden times till the present, one square inch has sufficed to lead man's heart astray?"

If we read these chapters as a description of the alchemistic *opus*, then the

¹ See the description of the "two souls" on page 14 above.

harmony of *yin* and *yang* applies to the correct apportionment of the ingredients used, the *house* is the crucible, *passion* is the fire, the technique of the coitus indicates the firing times, *man* is the lead, *woman* the cinnabar, and the embryo is the mercury, the Elixir of Longevity.

As a second example I translate here Chapter 73, which stresses the cosmic significance and the perfect naturalness of sexual congress—and of the alchemistic processes.

"If things lack either *yin* or *yang*, they run counter to Heaven and turn their back on their own origin. If a hen lays an egg all by itself, no chicken will take shape in it. Why is this so? Because if there is no mating, the Threefold Harmony¹ and the Five Elements will not be blended. 'Hard' and 'soft' (the male and female generative organs) remain apart. The spending of seed (of Heaven, and the man) and the giving shape to that seed (by Earth, and the woman), is the natural way of Heaven and Earth, as natural as a fire when started blazing upward, and running water flowing downward. These phenomena are perfectly natural, they act thus without having been taught to do so. This tendency was there from the very beginning, and it can never be changed. When one contemplates female and male united in sexual congress, the 'hard' and 'soft' are tightly welded together, they can not be taken apart at that moment because they have then attained their tally-like union.² This is not achieved by special skill, and it had not been taught to them. It must be compared with man being born lying face down, and woman lying on her back. They were endowed in this way while still in their foetal stage, when they were conceived by the vital essence (*ch'i*). And not only do men and women assume these positions when they are born, they are seen to assume those respective positions also when they are dead. This was not taught to them by their parents. It is rooted in (the basic position assumed during) the coitus, which fixes the original pattern".

The statement that the corpse of a man will face downward while that of a woman will face upward, refers to the Chinese belief that the corpses of drowned persons will be found floating on the water in those positions; cf. the discussion quoted on p. 159 below, by the 5th-century physician Ch'u Têng.

The chapters translated above may suffice to give the reader a general idea of style and tenor of this curious treatise. As a whole, the *Ts'an-t'ung-ch'i*

¹ The text has *san-wu* "three-five", doubtless an abbreviation of *san-ho wu-hsing* "the three harmonies and the five elements". *San-ho* refers to the *ch'i* of *yin*, *yang* and Heaven; it is only through the blending of these three that procreation can take place. Cf. the Ku-liang commentary on *Ch'un-ch'iu* and *Tso-chuan*, under the third year of Duke Chuang (690 B.C.).

² An ancient Chinese tally consisted of a wooden tablet, broken in two halves. Each party to the agreement kept one half, and in case of doubt it was verified whether the two halves fitted together.

does credit to Wei Po-yang's careful scrutiny of natural phenomena, and to his serious endeavour to correlate them in one comprehensive system.

It is worth noting that Chapter 8 and Chapter 27 correlate man and woman, lead and cinnabar in the following way with the White Tiger and the Green Dragon:

White Tiger	— lead	— fire	— <i>ch'i</i>	— west	— <i>yang</i>	— man
Green Dragon	— cinnabar	— water	— ova	— east	— <i>yin</i>	— woman

If one compares this table with the one given on page 40 above, one will notice that man and woman have changed places. Now woman is the Dragon, symbol of east and light and fertilizing rain, she is the red cinnabar that blending with the white lead of the man gives birth to the mercury, the Great Beginning. Fig. 3, a reproduction of a picture in the Ming blockprint *Hsing-ming-kuei-chih* shows how later alchemists represented this. The male element and the lead are depicted as a young man riding on a tiger, the female element and mercury as a girl on a green dragon; their essence is projected into a bronze cauldron. The inscription on top reads: "Picture of the intercourse of Dragon and Tiger", and the accompanying poem says:

The white-faced boy rides on the White Tiger,
The green-robed girl straddles the Green Dragon.
After lead and mercury have met by the cauldron,
At once they shall therein be blended together.

Male and female thus changing places must be explained by the fact that in Taoist alchemy dormant matriarchal memories reasserted themselves.

The Taoist speculations on the magical power of the sexual union applied to both man and woman. Although there were some Taoist adepts who selfishly concentrated on strengthening their own vital force by tapping that of their woman-partners, disregarding their health and sometimes even harming it, the general principle was that both partners should share in the benefits accruing from the sexual discipline. Indeed Taoism has been on the whole much more considerate to woman, and has given much more thought to her physical and emotional needs than Confucianism ever did.

The idea of man and woman strengthening their vital force by the sexual act gave rise to a current of mass-mysticism that at various times profoundly stirred the Chinese people and was at the root of many a nation-wide religious movement and many a political revolt. Some Taoist sects propagating the engaging in sexual disciplines *en masse*,¹ roused the participants to a mystic

¹ The first sinologue who drew attention to these sexual practises of the Taoists was H. Maspero, in his detailed study "Les Procédés de Nourrir le Principe Vital dans la religion Taoïste ancienne" (*Journal Asiatique*, Paris 1937).

龍虎交媾圖

白面郎君騎白虎
青衣女下跨青龍
鉛汞鼎邊相見後
一時閑鎖在其中



Figure 3

Green Dragon and White Tiger
(same source as Figure 2)

ecstasy that made them believe themselves to be invulnerable and invincible in battle. The earliest example of such a national religious movement based on Taoist sexual disciplines is the rebellion of the Yellow Turbans, that was instrumental in the downfall of the Later Han dynasty.

Before describing this rebellion, however, we must first succinctly review the main historical events that marked the Later Han period (25–220 A.D.).

The last Emperors of the Former Han Dynasty had been weak and dissolute—I refer to what was said in the beginning of this chapter of Ai-ti. He was the last of them, and on his death left the throne to a mere child. Then a very able but ambitious man called Wang Mang was appointed Regent. Soon he usurped the throne and declared himself the founder of a new dynasty. Wang Mang introduced some sweeping reforms, including nationalization of the land and parcelling it out to the tenant farmers, and the abolition of slavery. He patronized Confucianism, but personally inclined more to Taoist teachings. A modern scholar is probably right in interpreting the fact that Wang Mang just before his downfall surrounded himself by beautiful young girls recruited from all over the Empire, as an attempt on his part to restore his “aura” and his political prestige by cohabitating with many young women, according to the Taoist principles described in the above.¹

Loyalism to the house of Han was still strong, and Wang Mang had alienated the great families by his taking their land away from them. In 20 A.D. the loyalist forces rallied, defeated Wang Mang’s armies, and restored the Han Dynasty. The first Emperors of this Later Han period were again strong men who re-established order in the war-torn empire, expanded and consolidated the national frontiers, and patronized Confucianist learning, and arts and letters in general. Then, however, there was a succession of boy-emperors, which increased the influence of the palace women. Empresses, consorts and favourites often dominated the government, and had their relatives and protégés appointed in responsible positions. Time and again loyal scholar-officials protested against this situation. There has been preserved a philippic against women meddling in government affairs, which reflects the Confucianist attitude to woman in general. In the reign of the Emperor An (98–125 A.D.) his wet-nurse had obtained great influence at court, and her daughter, a lewd woman, indulged in sexual license and helped to bribe officials. Then the famous orthodox Confucianist statesman Yang Chen (died 124 A.D.) addressed the Throne saying i.a.:

If women are entrusted with tasks involving contact with the outside, they will cause disorder and confusion in the Empire, harm and bring

¹ Cf. Maspero, in his article cited on p. 84, note 1; page 410.

shame on the Imperial Court, and sully sun and moon (i.e. Emperor and Empress). The Book of Documents (*Shu-ching*) cautions against the hen announcing dawn instead of the cock, the Book of Odes (*Shih-ching*) denounces a clever woman overthrowing a state (cf. p. 29). For women and people of lowly station are glad when one is too friendly with them, and become resentful when one keeps them at a distance (paraphrase of Confucius' pronouncement in *Lun-yü*, Book XVII, quoted on page 44 above. Transl.), indeed they are difficult to rear . . . Women should not be allowed to take part in government affairs.

(text in Yang Chên's biography, ch. 84 of the *Hou-han-shu*)

But such remonstrations were of no avail. The women found support with the palace eunuchs, and soon the affairs of state were actually conducted by that group of corrupt persons. As a consequence of their misrule the central power again declined. The familiar signs of the impending fall of the dynasty made their appearance.

In the meantime Taoism had become an organized church, with its own hierarchy. Its followers, both men (*tao-nan*) and women (*tao-nü*) were united in closely-knit religious communities. This growth of the organized Taoist church must probably be viewed in part as a reaction to the menace of the strong Confucianist bureaucracy, and the increasing power of the Buddhist church with its strict rules, and its compact clerical hierarchy. The Buddhist creed had become known in China ca. the beginning of our era. Since then the efforts of the missionaries from Central Asia and India had resulted in the Buddhist church acquiring a large following among the Chinese population. Since Buddhism, just as Taoism, preached salvation and treated women as the equal of man in religion, the Taoists recognized in them rivals even more dangerous than the Confucianists, and felt the need to develop their strength so as to be able to withstand their competition.

Towards the end of the second century A.D. the Taoist church was headed by a kind of High Priest called Chang Chüeh, who was assisted by his two brothers Chang Liang and Chang Pao. Chang Chüeh was said to have obtained the Elixir of Immortality, and he was credited with possessing unlimited magical powers.

Through the maladministration of the clique of the eunuchs at court, the economic situation had deteriorated and there was widespread discontent. Then a disastrous epidemic ravaged the land, and Chang Chüeh and his followers gained the reputation to be able to cure people by magic charms. When hundreds and thousands of people flocked to Chang Chüeh, he resolved to create a revolt, overthrow the Han dynasty, and found a new Taoist Empire. A mystic fervour took hold of the masses, powerful Taoist armies where men and women marched together rose in several parts of the country, and in

184 A.D. occupied large parts of it in a remarkably short time. They were called Yellow Turbans because they wound yellow scarfs (*huang-chin*) round their heads. The revolt was at last smothered in blood, but it signified the end of the Han dynasty. For the generals who had subdued the revolt had become so powerful that they scorned the central power. They first did away with the Han Emperor and his eunuchs, then engaged in bloody warfare amongst themselves, each trying to found a new dynasty. This inaugurated the period of the Three Kingdoms, *San-kuo*, so called because in the end three generals each founded his own dynasty. It was the first phase of a period which will be discussed in the next chapter, during which China was divided into a number of small dynasties, and which was to last till 590 A.D.

The official dynastic annals record in detail the events of the military campaign against the Yellow Turbans, but give scant information on their organization and their beliefs. However, even after their defeat, the disciples of Chang Chüeh continued their master's teachings, and thereby drew the attention of their Buddhist opponents. It is the latter who later placed on record some data about the practices of the Yellow Turbans, which prove that those sectarians engaged in sexual disciplines *en masse*. This they called *ho-ch'i* "uniting the male and female essence".

In the Buddhist collection *Kuang-hung-ming-chi* compiled by the T'ang monk Tao Hsüan there is included a work entitled *Erh-chiao-lun* "Discussion of Confucianism and Taoism", written by the Buddhist monk Tao An, who lived from 292 till 363 A.D.—i.e. only a hundred years or so after the uprising of the Yellow Turbans. In the 9th section of his book, Tao An quotes and refutes some statements ascribed to the Taoist patriarch Chang Tao-ling (ca. 100 A.D.) whom the Yellow Turbans considered as one of their particular saints. Under the statement "Sexual intercourse will procure absolution of all sins", *ho-ch'i-shih-tsui*, Tao An observes:

The Taoists wantonly practise obscene disciplines from the Yellow Book (*huang-shu*) which include 'opening the gate of life', 'embracing the Adept's infant', and 'making dragon and tiger sport together'; also the art of sexual intercourse of 3-5-7-9, and the Heavenly and Earthly net as taught in the Yellow Book, whereby men and women indulge in promiscuous sexual intercourse like birds and beasts in order thereby to avert calamities. How could this be possible?

(SPTK edition, ch. 8, page 19b)

The "Yellow Book" was one of the secret manuals of the Yellow Turbans. Another Buddhist work gives a slightly more elaborate summary of its content. This is the *Pien-chêng-lun* by the monk Fa Lin, also included in the *Kuang-hung-ming-chi* mentioned above. There it is said:

The Yellow Book says: 'Open the Gate of Life, embrace the Adept's infant. Make Dragon and Tiger sport together according to the rules for the 3-5-7-9 strokes, the Heavenly and Earthly net. Open the Red Gate, insert the Jade Stalk. *Yang* will imagine the Mother of Yin white like jade, *Yin* will imagine the Father of Yang fondling and encouraging her with his hands.

(SPTK edition, ch. 13, page 29b)

Although the terms "Heavenly and Earthly net", and "Father and Mother of *yin* and *yang*" are not clear, after what was said in the above the rest of the text is easily understood.

Moreover, there is other evidence that these sexual disciplines were practised in the *kuan*, the Taoist monasteries. This evidence is found in the *Hsiao-tao-lun* "Discussions Ridiculing Taoism", a treatise also found in the *Kuang-hung-ming-chi* mentioned above. This treatise, consisting of 38 sections, was written by the Taoist Chên Luan, after he had been converted to Buddhism. This book, dated 570 A.D., says in section 35:

When I was twenty years old I was fond of Taoist studies and was enrolled in a Taoist monastery. There we were first taught the practice of *ho-ch'i* according to the Yellow Book, and the 3-5-7-9-method of sexual intercourse. In pairs of 'four eyes and two tongues' we practised Tao in the Cinnabar Field.¹ Some said one could overcome thereby obstacles and prolong one's life. Husbands exchanged wives, all for carnal pleasure, they were not ashamed to do these things even before the eyes of their fathers and elder brothers. This they called the 'True Art of Obtaining Vital Essence'. At present the Taoists regularly engage in these practices, in order thereby to attain the True Way. How could this ever be?

(SPTK edition, ch. 9, p. 30b)

Also in later centuries there were not a few cases of sexual mysticism flaring up in the same way as at the time of the Yellow Turban revolt. In a remarkably short time thousands of men and women would join such a religious sect, unite themselves in secret communities, hold meetings and stubbornly resist all attempts by the authorities at disbanding them. As late as the Ch'ing Dynasty (1644-1912) such religious movements occurred, especially in Shantung Province where in the Chou period the State of Ch'i was located, always the home of mediums, magicians and sorcerers. An Imperial Edict of 1839 says that in the place Kao-mi of that province men and women had formed a sect called K'un-tan. Only men and women who practised its disciplines in couples were admitted to it. "They gather in the night, many people

¹ "Cinnabar Field", in Chinese *tan-t'ien*. The human body is divided into three of these, one in the head, one in the breast, and one below the navel. It is the latter one that figures largely in texts on sexual alchemy.

together in one room, and without the lamps burning. Then they have sexual intercourse in the dark".¹ The *Ta-yü-chi* "Records of Great Criminal Cases" by an anonymous Ch'ing author (printed in the collection *Shuo-k'u*) describes another uprising, also in Shantung Province. In 1852 a Taoist magician called Chou Hsing-yüan who had studied the *Ts'an-t'ung-ch'i* and other Taoist books on sexual disciplines claimed that he could cure diseases and prolong life. He gathered a large following, also among the gentry, and men and women practised these disciplines together. When the authorities took action against them the sectarians fortified themselves in a mountainous place near Fei-ch'eng, under the leadership of Chang Chi-chung, one of Chou Hsing-yüan's disciples. They were forced to surrender, and hundreds of men and women perished voluntarily in their burning fortress. Afraid of eventual political consequences, the government mercilessly exterminated such sects, on the pretext that "they offended against good morals".

This Taoist sexual mysticism is so deeply rooted that even to-day it occasionally flares up. In the end of 1950 the Chinese People's Republic suppressed a Taoist secret sect called *I-kuan-tao*. These sectarians opposed the government, but the authorities took also exception to the sexual practises in which they indulged. The newspaper *Kuang-ming-jih-pao* of November 20, 1950 says that the "shamelessly lustful leaders of I-kuan-tao" carried out "beauty contests" with the female members of the sect, and that during "Taoist study classes" they made the members engage in promiscuous sexual intercourse, promising the participants immortality and freedom from disease. Thus a modern Chinese newspaper echoes thoughts dating from two thousand years back.

¹ Edict with Chinese text quoted in J. J. M. de Groot, "Sectarianism and Religious Persecution in China", Leiden 1902 (Peking reprint 1940), vol. II page 527.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE THREE KINGDOMS AND THE SIX DYNASTIES 221-590 A.D.

The *San-kuo* "Three Kingdoms" that succeeded the Later Han dynasty soon broke up again, and barbarians of Tungusic descent, the Toba, invaded the divided Empire. Thus began the period of the *Liu-ch'ao*, the Six Dynasties, during which the northern half of the country was ruled by the barbarian Toba or Wei Dynasty (386-534), while the south was in the hands of a number of short-lived minor Chinese dynasties. Although the latter are called "dynasties" most of them were rather warlord-rules; states founded by a capable general who during his life time succeeded in holding sway over a larger or smaller area, but whose successors soon lost both territory and throne. Some of these minor "Emperors" had the ambition of ousting the barbarians from the north and of re-uniting the Chinese Empire, but the most they actually achieved was to prevent the enemy from invading also the southern half of the country.

In the third century the confused political situation occasioned an intense activity in the field of philosophy. Many scholars felt the necessity of re-examining their attitude to human life and its problems, and the merits of Confucianism and Taoism were eagerly discussed. Thus there originated the *ch'ing-t'an* "detached (literally: pure) conversations", metaphysical discussions among groups of prominent writers and thinkers where they frankly exchanged their views.

For our present subject two well known exponents of *ch'ing-t'an* are of importance, namely the great musician and philosopher Hsi K'ang (223-262 A.D.), and his bosom friend the poet Juan Chi (210-263 A.D.).¹ Their close friendship has become the classical example of similar male attachments among poets and artists of later ages—as for instance of the T'ang poets Li Po (701-762) and Mêng Hao-jan (689-740), and Po Chü-i (772-846) and

¹ Hsi K'ang was the central figure of the literary circle known as *Chu-lin-ch'i-hsien* "The Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove". For a detailed account of this circle and its activities see my book "Hsi K'ang and his Poetical Essay on the Lute" (*Monumenta Nipponica Monographs*, Sophia University), Tōkyō 1941.

Yüan Chên (779–831). Whether those friendships actually bore a homosexual character is a moot problem that deserves a further examination.

None of the four T'ang poets mentioned were pronouncedly homosexual, we know that three of them were married and had intimate relations with singing girls. This does not preclude their having been bisexual, but Chinese sexological literature—i.e. the *Tuan-hsiu-pien* mentioned on page 63—does not mention these famous pairs in lists of historical examples of male homosexuality. It may be argued that men like Li Po, Po Chü-i etc. were so highly respected because of their literary achievements that people were reluctant to record their foibles. But pornographic texts do not mention them either, and the writers of that genre of literature took a perverse pleasure in drawing great old names through the mud. Moreover, it should be remembered that male friendship was one of the social relationships extolled by the Classics, and that men used to express their affection for their friends in warmer terms than is customary in most Western countries. This affectionate language does not warrant the general assumption that the men who used it had homosexual relations with each other. Although as a matter of course it is very difficult to give a definite opinion on this delicate problem, I believe that unless there is stronger evidence to the contrary, we can assume that as a rule those close friendships between famous ancient literati did not include homosexual relations.

In the case of Hsi K'ang and Juan Chi, however, there is indeed strong evidence to the contrary. Since this is one of the very few cases about which we have some concrete information, it is discussed here in some detail.

The *Shih-shuo-hsin-yü*, a collection of notes and anecdotes compiled by Liu I-ch'ing (402–444 A.D.) gives in ch. 19, entitled *Hsien-yüan* "Wise Women", the following story about Hsi K'ang and Juan Chi, and their friend Shan T'ao (205–283 A.D.):

When Shan T'ao met Hsi K'ang and Juan Chi, he at once established with them a friendship that 'breaks metal and has the fragrance of orchids' (quoted from the *I-ching*; cf. page 102 below). Shan T'ao's wife, *née* Han, discovered that her husband's affection for those two was different from an ordinary friendship, and asked him about it. Her husband said: 'Those two are the only persons I consider as my real friends'. His wife then said: '(In olden times) the wife of Fu-chi herself spied on Hu-yen and Chao-ts'ui, I feel like spying on your two friends. Do you object?' Thereafter, when Hsi K'ang and Juan Chi came to visit them, Mrs. Shan urged her husband to make them stay overnight. She prepared wine and food for them, then in the night made a hole in the wall and observed them, not leaving off till dawn. Then her husband came in and asked her: 'What do you think of those two now?' His wife replied: 'Their talents are much greater than yours, they must have befriended you because of

your knowledge'. Shan Tao remarked: 'Those two indeed always consider my knowledge as superior to theirs'.

(*Op. cit.* SPTK edition, ch. 19, page 22b)

The words about "an affection that differs from an ordinary friendship" already suggest a homosexual relationship, but the point is proved by Mrs. Shan quoting the particular case of Fu-chi's wife. She alludes to an old story told about the famous Chin Prince Ch'ung-êrh. In 636 B.C. Ch'ung-êrh had taken refuge in the state of Ts'ao, together with his followers Hu-yen and Chao-ts'ui. The Prince of Ts'ao had heard that Ch'ung-êrh had double ribs, and wanted to verify this by spying on him when he was naked. Therefore the Prince, together with an official called Hsi Fu-chi and the latter's wife, made a hole in the wall of the room where Ch'ung-êrh and his two followers were taking a bath. Thereafter the wife remarked that the latter two seemed capable of becoming ministers of state.¹ Evidently she based her opinion on the physical behaviour of the men she had seen naked, and not on their talk. It is clear, therefore, that Mrs. Shan chose this allusion to indicate that she wanted to verify whether Hsi K'ang and Juan Chi were indeed intimate together.

Although art and literature continued to flourish even in this turbulent period, especially during the Chin (317-419) and Liang (502-556) dynasties, the unsettled times dislocated the system of the civil service examinations, and Confucianist learning declined. Generally speaking morals were lax, and especially at the courts of most of the minor dynasties debauch and political assassination were the order of the day.

Notorious in this respect was the Former Sung dynasty (420-477)—called "former" to distinguish it from the great Sung dynasty that came later—which rose and perished in murder and bloodshed among the ruling Liu clan. In the 57 years that this "dynasty" lasted, no less than nine rulers occupied the throne, and few of those died a natural death. I mention especially Fei-ti "the deposed Emperor" (Liu Tzû-yeh, 449-465), the boy-emperor of fifteen years who for one hectic year reigned in the Sung capital Nanking. He was a depraved, superstitious youth who in many respects reminds one of the Roman boy-emperor Heliogabalus (218-221 A.D.). He indulged in sexual orgies indiscriminately with women and eunuchs, and behaved in every way as a neurotic sadist. In 456 he was murdered by his own relatives. The dynastic history of the Former Sung period relates the following incident. One day the boy-emperor's dissolute sister, the Princess Shan-yin, said to him: "Al-

¹ The occurrence is mentioned in two Chou sources, viz. CC, vol. I, page 344, and *Kuo-yü*, SPTK edition, ch. 10, page 5a; the latter stresses the large part Fu-chi's wife took in spying on the naked men.

though Your Majesty is a man and I a woman, both of us are of the Imperial blood. Now Your Majesty has six palaces with more than ten-thousand women, while I have only one husband. How can such iniquity be?" Thereupon her brother assigned thirty men to her as consorts" (*op. cit.* ch. 7).

One of the most remarkable personalities of this period was the Taoist philosopher Ko Hung, better known by his pseudonym Pao-p'u-tzû "The Master embracing Simplicity", who flourished ca. 300 A.D. He was an original thinker of wide learning, who contributed greatly to the development of Chinese scientific thought (cf. SCC, vol. II, page 437 sq.). His teachings are embodied in a voluminous work of 70 ch., that bears the title *Pao-p'u-tzû*. Not all of it was written by Ko Hung himself, parts of the text consist of his pronouncements as recorded by his disciples, and some passages may be later interpolations. As we have it now, however, this text is a mine of information, not only on Taoist alchemy, but also on popular beliefs, customs and manners of that time. Here we shall quote those passages that pertain to the sexual relations of the period under discussion.

It is proved clearly that not only the Taoists, but also the people in general continued to practise the teachings of the old handbooks of sex. Ko Hung says in ch. 6 of the *Nei-p'ien*:

Someone asked: 'I have heard that the Art of the Bedchamber comprises the entire Supreme Way, and in itself suffices towards one's attaining immortality. This art is also said to enable a man to avert calamities and to absolve him of sin, and to change ill luck into good; that officials will thereby obtain promotion and merchants double profit. Do you believe this?'

Pao-p'u-tzû answered: These are all spurious sayings from the books of the magicians, subsequently expanded and embellished by amateurs, so that by now their real meaning has become lost. Some persons also propound such false teachings in order to indulge in adultery and to cheat the common people, they obscure the real principles in order to obtain employment and to attract disciples, and thus to acquire material gain. Now the art of *yin* and *yang* (i.e. sexual intercourse) is most suited for curing minor ills, and it will also prevent debility. However, this art carries its own limitations, how would it ever enable one to reach immortality? Not to speak of the claim that thereby one can avert misfortune and attract good luck!

(*Pao-p'u-tzû*, SPTK edition, page 9b)

While Ko Hung thus recognizes that the Art of the Bedchamber is one of many ways to prolong one's life and to cure minor diseases, he denies that it is the sole means for reaching immortality. Further along, he continues his argument as follows:

When the common people hear that the Yellow Emperor (Huang-ti) ascended Heaven (as an Immortal) because he had sexual intercourse with twelve hundred women, they think that this was the only reason why he achieved longevity. They do not know that at the foot of the Ching Mountain and on the bank of the Ting Lake¹ the Yellow Emperor distilled the Ninefold Drug and having partaken thereof ascended Heaven riding on a dragon. It is true that he also had intercourse with twelve hundred women, but this was not the sole cause of his success. On the other hand, if one partakes of all the various magic drugs and nurtures one's three natures, while at the same time being ignorant of the Art of the Bedchamber, those drugs and disciplines will prove to be without effect. Therefore the Sages of olden times, fearing lest people would treat sexual desire lightly, praised the merits of the sexual act in words, but those words should not be implicitly believed. The Dark Girl (Hsüan-nü) and the Plain Girl (Su-nü) compared the sexual act with the intermingling of water and fire, stating that water and fire can kill people but also give them new life, depending on whether those people do or do not know the correct methods of sexual intercourse. This art is based on the theory that the more women a man copulates with, the greater will be the benefit he derives from the act; and that for a man who is ignorant of this art, copulation with only one or two women suffices to bring about his untimely death. The methods taught by P'êng-tsu stress this principle, while other handbooks preach various troublesome and difficult methods of sexual intercourse, but the benefit derived therefrom is not as large as those books aver, and but very few people can put these methods into practice.

(*Ibid.*, pages 10a and b)

These two passages are especially interesting because Ko Hung quotes here the various opinions about the Art of the Bedchamber current in his time. It is curious to note that some people believed that this art could procure i.e. promotion for officials, and more profit for merchants. And also that apparently there were in Ko Hung's time charlatans who taught this subject against payment.

In ch. 5 Ko Hung says:

The Han minister Chang Ts'ang (275-206 B.C.) happened to learn a minor art, namely that of sucking the secretions from women's breasts. Thereby he lived to an age of 180 years.

(SPTK edition, page 6a)

This seems to be the first time that the secretions of women's breasts are mentioned as a medicine for strengthening the man's vital force. As we shall see

¹ The *Shih-chi* of Szü-ma Ch'ien relates in the ch. Fêng-shan that the Yellow Emperor cast a bronze tripod at the foot of the Ching Mountain (in Shensi Province), whereupon a dragon came down from heaven to carry him away to the Abode of the Immortals. Near that mountain there was a lake, later called Ting-hu "Tripod Lake".

on page 283 below, this idea was later worked out into a theory about the "Medicine of the Three Peaks", viz. the woman's saliva, secretions of her breasts, and of her vagina. The theory of the breasts containing an elixir seems to have arisen in Ko Hung's time, for Chang Ts'ang's biography in ch. 42 of Szû-ma Ch'ien's *Shih-chi* does not mention it.

As to P'eng Tsu's teachings mentioned above, Ko Hung says more about them in ch. 13.

According to the *P'eng-tsu-ching*, P'êng-tsu served as counsellor of the (mythical) Emperors from Ti-ku till Yao, all through till the King of Yin, who sent him to Ts'ai-nü (the Elected Girl; the text writes *ts'ai* with the 120th radical added. Transl.) to learn from her the Art of the Bedchamber. When the King found this art to be indeed effective, he wanted to kill P'êng-tsu so that no one else would learn the secret. But P'êng-tsu knew of this plan and fled. At that time he had already reached the age of seven or eight hundred years.

(SPTK edition, ch. 13, page 4b)

P'êng-tsu was a mythical person of high antiquity, in Western books often referred to as the "Chinese Methusalem". Since it was believed that he had reached his venerable age by his proficiency in the Art of the Bedchamber, he was made the alleged author of a handbook of sex popular in Ko Hung's time. The latter mentions it again in his catalogue of Taoist books (*op. cit.* ch. 19), where he lists the following handbooks of sex:

Jung-ch'êng-ching "Handbook of Master Jung-ch'eng"
Hsüan-nü-ching "Handbook of the Dark Girl"
Su-nü-ching "Handbook of the Plain Girl"
P'êng-tsu-ching "Handbook of P'êng-tsu".

Items 1-3 were already discussed in the above. As regards P'êng-tsu's theories, there survive some fragments of late-Chou or early-Han date that bear his name. In one of these fragments "P'êng-tsu" enumerates all the strong emotions that harm mankind, such as excessive anger, excessive expectations, and "yin and yang not communicating". He then pursues:

Many indeed are the things that harm man, but all of them have their root in the bedchamber. How people are deluded by this! Man and woman mutually complete each other, just like Heaven and Earth gave birth to each other. Tao nourishes the vital force (*ch'i*) in order that man may not lose his harmony. Heaven and Earth have obtained the Way of sexual intercourse, therefore they are everlasting. But man has lost the Way of sexual intercourse, therefore he has become mortal. To be able to avoid all harmful things, and to obtain the art of yin and yang, this is the Way of Immortality.

(CSK, *Shang-ku-san-tai*, ch. 16, page 7b)

Above it was remarked that the Confucianists approved of the principles set forth in the handbooks of sex, provided they were put into practice only inside the bedchamber, and with the obtaining of offspring as their main goal. According to the Confucianist conception, the husband's interest in his wife as a human being was supposed to cease as soon as she had left his bed. One need not wonder, therefore, that as a rule very little was done for the literary education of girls and women, it was thought sufficient if they knew how to please their husband in bed, look after the young children, and perform their household tasks. They were not supposed to share the man's intellectual interests and they were strictly forbidden to meddle with his activities outside the house. Even the young daughters in upper class families were taught only the womanly skills such as weaving and sewing, and looking after the household, they were not taught reading and writing in the regular manner. And although there were not a few girls who learned to read and write by themselves in a haphazard way, the majority of decent women was illiterate. It was, curiously enough, the singing girls who learned elementary reading and writing as part of their professional training.

In the early years of the Later Han period there had been one woman who took exception to this situation, and who advocated that girls should receive the same elementary education as boys. This was the Lady Pan Chao (died 116 A.D.), daughter of the well-known writer and administrator Pan Piao (3-54 A.D.), and younger sister of the even more famous historian Pan Ku (32-92 A.D.), author of the Former Han Dynastic history. Pan Chao married a certain Mr. Ts'ao when she was fourteen, but her husband died young. She never remarried but devoted herself to literary studies and became famous for her polished style and her wide learning. When her brother Pan Ku had died, the Emperor Ho (89-105 A.D.) ordered her to finish the parts of the Han History which her brother had left uncompleted, and also appointed her Instructress to the Empress. She died at an advanced age, greatly honoured because of her chastity and her learning.

The Lady Pan would deserve to be called China's first feminist, were it not that she wrote the *Nü-chieh* "Women's Precepts", one of the most bigotted books in Chinese literature. She was deeply devoted to Confucianist teachings and although advocating that women should be educated, she insisted that this education ought to be aimed exclusively at teaching woman her inferiority to man, and inculcate in her absolute obedience to her husband. Confucianists of all ages have held up her "Women's Precepts" as a shining example for womanhood. It inspired later writers to compose similar treatises, which together with the *Nü-chieh* have enjoyed great popularity with Chinese,

Korean and Japanese orthodox scholars of later times, especially during the Ch'ing period.¹

This document, the most representative example of the orthodox Confucianist attitude to woman, deserves to be translated here in full.² I omit only the brief preface, wherein the Lady Pan states that since her son has grown up and entered official life successfully, her only remaining anxiety is for her daughters; she hopes they will take her precepts to heart when they have married.

WOMEN'S PRECEPTS

I. On woman's low and humble estate

In olden times when a daughter was born, on the third day she was cradled on the floor below the bed, and she was given a loomwhorl as toy (cf. the *Shih-ch'ing* quotation on page 16 above). Then her parents fasted and reported her birth in the ancestral hall.

She was cradled on the floor to show her low estate and her subservience. She was given a loomwhorl as toy to clarify her being destined for labour and dedicated to diligent service. And their solemnly reporting her birth to the ancestors signified her duty of continuing the lineage of her lord.

These three duties constitute the unchanging pattern for woman, as taught by the Rites and Regulations.

To be humble, yielding, respectful and reverential; to put herself after

¹ In the T'ang dynasty a Mrs. Ch'ên (*née* Ch'êng) wrote a "Book of Filial Piety for Women", *Nü-hsiao-ch'ing* (text in SF), and during the Ming period the Empress Jên-hsiao wrote the *Nei-hsün* "Instructions for the Inner Apartments" (1405), and the Empress Chiang the *Nü-hsün* "Instructions for Women" (1406); the latter gives in chapter 9 rules for pre-natal care. Both *Nei-hsün* and *Nü-hsün* were much studied also in Japan, and published in official reprints (*kampan*) by the Tokugawa Academy in 1832. This genre was especially popular during the Ch'ing dynasty (1644-1912). Famous is the *Nü-hsüeh* "Study for Women", written by the staunch Confucianist Lan Ting-yüan (1680-1733), further there appeared in this period a number of *Hsin-fu-pu* "Manuals for Brides", all of which breathe the bigoted atmosphere of the Precepts. A related genre is represented by the *Lieh-nü-chuan* "Biographies of Eminent Women", original text written by the Han scholar Liu Hsiang (77-6 B.C.), later several times augmented. It consists of edifying stories about women who sacrificed themselves for their husbands, virtuous widows who preferred death to being remarried, women who gave wise counsel to their men, etc. Most of the old stories briefly recorded in the Tso-chuan and mentioned in Chapter II of the present volume are here re-written in an enlarged form, and re-fashioned so as to conform to Confucianist ideals of the Han period. Of the later reprints of this work I mention the fine Ming edition, profusely illustrated with drawings by the famous artist Ch'iu Ying, and which was published in facsimile reproduction by Omura Seigai in his series *Zuhon-sokankai* (Tōkyō ca. 1923). There is a good English translation by A. R. O'Hara S.J., entitled "The position of women in early China, including translation of *Lieh Nü Chuan*", Hongkong 1955; since the *Lieh-nü-chuan* bears the stamp of Han Confucianism, it would have been better if "early" in the title had been replaced by "Han".

² I used the text as printed in SF.

others; not to talk about her merits and not to argue about her faults; to bear with reproach and to endure slights; always to act with circumspection—these qualities are those exemplifying woman's low and humble estate.

To retire late and to rise early; not to shirk exertion from dawn till dark; not to argue about her private affairs; to apply herself diligently to both difficult and easy tasks; and to be neat and orderly—this is called being diligent.

To behave properly and decorously in serving her husband; to be serene and self-possessed, shunning jests and laughter; being careful about the sacrificial food to be offered to the ancestors—this is called being worthy of continuing the husband's lineage.

If a woman possesses the above-mentioned three qualities, then her reputation shall be excellent, and she need never fear degradation or insults. But if she should be lacking in these three, what kind of reputation shall she then have, and how shall she escape degradation and insults?

II. *On husband and wife*

The Way of husband and wife represents the harmonious blending of *yin* and *yang*, it establishes man's communion with the spirits, it reaffirms the vast significance of Heaven and Earth, and the great order of human relationships. It is therefore that the Book of Rites honours the relation of man and woman, and that the Book of Odes celebrates the sexual union of man and wife. Viewed in this manner it is manifest that this union must be highly esteemed.

If the husband is not worthy, he will not be able to guide his wife; if the wife is not worthy, she will not be able to serve her husband. If the husband does not guide his wife, he will lose his proper position; if the wife does not serve her husband, decorum and reason will disappear. For these two points are closely related.

Now I find that the gentlemen of to-day only know that they must guide their wives, and that their own prestige in the household must be maintained unimpaired. They instruct their sons in classical learning but they do not know that also their daughters are later expected to know how to serve their husbands, and how to follow Rites and Ceremonial. Is not then the fact that those gentlemen do teach their sons and do not teach their daughters, unreasonable discrimination?

The Book of Rites says that one begins teaching a boy when he is eight, and sends him to school when he is fifteen. Why should not this apply to girls also?

III. *On being reverential and careful*

Yin and *yang* are fundamentally different, hence man and woman differ in behaviour. Strength is the virtue of *yang*, yielding constitutes the use of *yin*. Man is honoured for his power, woman is praised for her weakness. Therefore the old proverb says: 'If one has a son one hopes he will become like a wolf, and fears he will become like a worm. If one has a daughter

one hopes she will become like a mouse and fears she will become like a tigress'.

Thus a woman can do no better than cultivating respectfulness, and to avoid harsh treatment by being obedient. Therefore it is said: 'To be reverent and obedient, that is the golden rule of wifehood'.

Now reverence is no other than endurance, and obedience is no other than forbearance. Those who endure shall learn moderation, and those who are yielding and forgiving shall easily be humble.

Indeed the bond between husband and wife is meant to be everlasting. Dalliance in the bedchamber will only create lewdness; lewdness will induce idle talk; idle talk will generate moral laxity; and moral laxity will breed with the wife contempt for her husband. The root of all these evils is their inability to learn moderation (in their sexual relations).

Now in serving a husband there are direct and indirect ways, and in talking to him there are things to be said and things not to be said. Directness must lead to strife, indirectness must lead to quarrels; and strife and quarrels lead to angry outbursts. The root of all these evils is a wife's inability to learn to be humble.

If a wife treats her husband with contempt he will scold her and shout at her, and if he can not contain his anger any longer he will beat and whip her. Now man and wife ought to be in harmony through decorum, and to be united through affection. If there is beating and whipping, how can there be decorum? If there is scolding and shouting, how can there be affection? And when both decorum and affection are gone, then husband and wife will be for ever apart.

IV. *On women's qualities*

Woman has four qualities, namely womanly attainments, womanly speech, womanly appearance, and womanly skills.

Indeed it has been said that as to attainments, a woman need not be extraordinarily intelligent; as to her speech, it need not be very clever; as to her appearance, it need not be handsome and elegant; and as to her skills, she need not be better than average.

To be gentle and sedate, constant and quiet, chaste and orderly, to be careful in her conduct, adhere to the rules in all her actions—those are real womanly attainments. To select her allocutions carefully, not to utter unseemly words, to reflect before speaking, to avoid loquacity—those constitute real womanly speech. To keep her face and hands washed clean, to wear proper clothes, and to bathe regularly so as to keep her body free from dirt—this constitutes real womanly appearance. To concentrate on spinning and weaving, to shun jest and laughter, to be neat in preparing food and wine for the guests—those are the real womanly skills.

These four points constitute the great qualities of a woman, she must not be lacking in one of them. To achieve this is very easy, provided she takes these things really to heart. The Ancients used to say: 'Is goodness not within everyone's grasp? If I really want to be good, then I *am* good'.¹

¹ Quoted from *Lun-yü*, Book VII, 29.

This pronouncement also applies to women's qualities.

V. *On concentrating the heart*

According to the Rites man has the right to marry more than one wife, but woman shall not follow two masters. For it is said: 'A husband is Heaven, and Heaven can not be shirked'. Therefore a wife can not leave her husband. If a person offends against the spirits on high, there will be Heavenly punishment; if a wife offends against Rites and Ceremonial, her husband will despise her. Therefore the *Nü-hsien*¹ says: 'A woman finds complete fulfilment in obtaining the love of one man; her losing that means complete failure'. Hence a woman must strive to win her husband's affection.

However, this does not imply that she should try to achieve this aim by artful flattery and passionate intimacy. She must concentrate her heart, cultivate dignified bearing, adhere to Rites and Decorum, and abide by purity.

She must not listen to lewd talk, not look at unseemly things; inside the house not slovenly dressed, outside the house not extravagantly made up; not mix with crowds, not peep out of the window—this is called concentrating the heart.

But if she engages in frivolous activities, if she listens to and looks at things she should not hear or see; if inside the house she goes about with tousled hair and carelessly attired; if outside the house she adopts an enticing mien, holds unseemly speech, watches unseemly sights—this certainly can not be called concentrating the heart.

VI. *Absolute obedience*

'A woman finds complete fulfilment in obtaining the love of one man; her losing that means complete failure', which means that a woman should be of resolute purpose and concentrate her mind on pleasing her husband. And how could she then lose the affection of her father- and mother-in-law?

But there are times when love causes estrangement, and dutiful behaviour causes ruin. If the husband says he loves his wife, and his parents say they do not—this implies for the wife that her dutiful behaviour (to her husband) causes her ruin.

Then how must a wife gain the affection of her parents-in-law? There is no other way than complete obedience. If her mother-in-law says 'It is not' while it is so, the wife must still obey her. And if the mother-in-law says 'It is so' while it is not so, the wife must still do as she says. It will not do that the wife disobeys, or engages her mother-in-law in an argument. This is what is called absolute obedience.

Therefore the *Nü-hsien* says: 'If a wife is like a shadow or an echo, how shall she not be praised?'

¹ *Nü-hsien* "Pattern for Women", an older book of the same character as the Precepts, which has not been preserved.

VII. *Harmony with brothers- and sisters-in-law*

If the wife wishes to obtain her husband's affection, she must first secure that of her parents-in-law. And in order to obtain the affection of her parents-in-law, she must first secure that of her brothers- and sisters-in-law. Now the wife's reputation within the house, whether good or bad, depends on her brothers- and sisters-in-law. Therefore the wife can not afford to lose¹ their sympathy. But there are few who realize this, and they can not, by harmonious relations, win their affection. How blind those women are!

No one can be like a Saint, no one is entirely without faults. Therefore the excellence of (Confucius' favourite disciple) Yen Hui lay in his ability to correct his mistakes, while Confucius himself praised him for not making the same mistake twice.² How then can wives be entirely without faults! Even if she has all the qualities of a virtuous woman, even if she be clever and wise, how could she be perfect? But if the members of a household live in harmony, then inside there will be no slander; whereas if there is estrangement within the household, every fault will be exaggerated. This is unavoidable. The *I-ching* says: 'If two people are of the same mind, they shall be able to break metal; if two people speak with one mind, their words will have the fragrance of the orchid'. This illustrates the importance of a harmonious household.

Now brothers- and sisters-in-law occupy the same station as the wife (in the household-hierarchy), but they are closer to the husband in family-relationship. Yet, if the wife is pliable, modest and obedient, she will be able to establish close ties with her brothers- and sisters-in-law in accordance with decorum, and by her reverential and affectionate attitude to them she will secure their help and support. They will make her good qualities shine forth and they will cover up her shortcomings. Her parents-in-law shall appreciate her goodness and her husband shall praise her beauty. Her reputation shall illuminate the neighbourhood and this splendour shall extend itself also to Her own father and mother.

But if a stupid wife should in front of her brothers-in-law extol her own fame and give herself airs, and in front of her sisters-in-law speak arrogantly of her husband's love for her—with such an overbearing attitude how can there be harmony? And with such cold and undecorous behaviour, how could she ever win praise? Then the others will cover up her good qualities and exaggerate her mistakes, her mother-in-law will be angry and her husband will feel hurt. Inside and outside the house she will be badly spoken of, she will be abused and humiliated, she will bring shame on her own father and mother, and increase her husband's troubles. Such are the roots of success and disgrace, such is the basis of good and bad reputation. Should not then a woman be on her guard against such mistakes?

In order to win the sympathy of the brothers- and sisters-in-law,

¹ The text (last column of page 5a) has *fu* "indeed", which I take to be a mistake for *shih* "to lose".

² Quoted from *Lun-yü*, Book VI, 2.

nothing equals modesty and obedience. Modesty is the cornerstone of virtuousness, obedience the proper conduct of a wife. These two qualities suffice for ensuring harmony in the household. As the Book of Odes says: 'On the one side no hatred, on the other side no dislike'. This line explains what is meant.

The Lady Pan's Precepts were certainly not put into practice in her own time, and only occasionally in the four or five centuries or so that followed. The Lady Pan's definition of the ideal wife remained wishful thinking of orthodox Confucianist householders for many centuries to come. This may be illustrated by the following passage from the work of Ko Hung, the third century philosopher quoted above. He there gives a graphic description by a nostalgic account of how they should behave according to classical standards.

The Book of Odes praises the union of husband and wife, but attaches supreme importance to the separation of the sexes. The Rites ordain that man and woman shall not see each other face to face unless in front of a go-between (and with the intention of marriage), that they shall not sit together, not hold conversation together, do not store their clothes and personal effects in one and the same place, do not hand things directly to each other; that older and younger sisters separate upon being married, and that elder and younger brothers do not sit on the same mat. Further, that news from outside shall not penetrate into the household, and news from within the household shall not become known outside; that women do not go outside the door to welcome or see off guests, that they cover their faces (when meeting outsiders), and that while walking in the street men shall keep to the left side of the road, and women to the right (so as to avoid accidental meetings). Such are the shining regulations in the separation of the sexes instituted by the Sages. Now of course a husband and wife must have their intimate relations. But except when he is ill, the husband shall not tarry in his women's quarters during daytime, and even when dying he shall not breathe his last in the arms of his wife. This applies all the more to the lesser occurrences of life.

(*Pao-p'u-tzu*, ch. 25, pages 5a-b)

After citing a few historical examples of the dire consequences of not obeying those regulations, Ko Hung then pursues:

But the vulgar women and girls of the present time do not any longer engage in spinning and weaving, they do not like any longer to make cap tassels,¹ they do not make hemp, but they love to gad about on the market place. They neglect the supervision of the kitchen, but devote

¹ *hsüan-tan* "cap tassels"; quoted from *Kuo-yü*, ch. 5 (SPTK ed. page 11b), where it is said that the virtuous queens of old used to weave with their own hands the tassels of the king's cap.

themselves to frivolous pleasures. They go out visiting to see their relatives, they proceed there by the light of the stars or carrying torches, night after night; they take a large suite with them, setting the street ablaze, maids, messengers, clerks and footmen, like a motley market crowd. Along the road those ladies indulge in unseemly jokes and pranks, which is really distasteful. Sometimes they then pass the night in another house, sometimes they return home only at a very late hour. These women also make pleasure trips to Buddhist temples, they go out to watch hunting and fishing, they organize picnics on hills and river banks. They even travel beyond the district-boundaries in order to go to congratulate relations (on birthdays or weddings) or to pay them visits of condolence (in the case of deaths). They proceed there in open carriages with the curtains raised, tarrying in every hamlet and city they pass through, drinking toasts, singing and making music on the way.

(*Ibid.*, pages 5b-6a)

Ko Hung calls such behaviour the beginning of the decay of the family, and of the ruin of the state, and warns wise men to keep their womenfolk better under control. Thereafter, however, he also sharply criticises the behaviour of many men in his time. They go about in boisterous groups, drinking and jesting together, and engaging in all sorts of practical jokes. When visiting the houses of married friends they will insist on meeting his womenfolk, and when those ladies make their appearance the men pass among each other loud remarks on their charms and defects. If a man refuses to let his women show themselves, his friends will start shouting and deriding him till he has complied with their wish. Then they will sit together with those women, exchange toasts with them, make them sing and dance, and hold unseemly conversation with them. Every person who wants to be considered a man of the world has to comply with these dissolute customs, every one who protests against them is considered as a boor. Such unruly and dissolute behaviour of the men, Ko Hung remarks, is as dangerous to the family and the state as the unseemly behaviour of the women.

Finally, Ko Hung has in the same chapter an important passage, that seems to be one of the earliest references to the custom later called *nao-fang* "to make a row in the bridal chamber", or also *hsi-fu* "to rag the bride". After the wedding banquet the guests bring the young couple to the bridal chamber, and there tease and make fun of them without any restraint, playing practical jokes on them till deep in the night. The custom is frequently referred to in Ming and Ch'ing literature and many writers of those times protested against the excesses that sometimes occurred. The custom still exists to-day, in a mitigated form. Ko Hung describes it in the following words:

Among the vulgar people prevails the rule of teasing the bride. Right before the assembled guests, and in front of the relatives of the young

couple, people will ask them coarse questions, and reprove them with lascivious address, their low and offensive behaviour is beyond words. They will even urge the pair on by beating them with whips, hang them up by their feet, flushed with wine those people will stop at nothing. They sometimes even wound the bride and groom so that their blood flows, or that their bones are broken.

(*Ibid.*, page 8a)

At first sight one feels inclined to interpret this custom as a remnant of old ceremonies intended to frighten off evil influences that might want to harm bride and groom when they exposed themselves during the consummation of the marriage—a belief often met with in comparative anthropology. However, as was explained in Chapter I and II, the ancient Chinese considered sexual intercourse, including the defloration of the bride, as acts ordained by nature and the sacred social order, and which did not expose those engaging in them to any particular dangers from the side of evil forces. On the contrary, abstention from the sexual act was viewed as involving grave risks of getting into the power of the forces of darkness, including possession by incubi (see page 152 below). But the situation may have been different in pre-historical times. And one must also reckon with the possibility that the custom originated with the aborigines of different race that inhabited the south-east and east of the Chinese continent, and became amalgamated with the Chinese race only during the last centuries B.C. The history and meaning of the custom of *nao-fang* is one of the many problems connected with Chinese sexual life that need a special investigation.

The Lady Pan's Precepts depict the idealized, Confucianist view of family-life, and Ko Hung's describes how far remote from this ideal was the actual condition prevailing in some leading city-milieus of his own time. The family-life of the Chinese in general followed a pattern in between these two extremes.

Below follows a brief description of average Chinese family life, meant to provide the background of the sexual relations within the household. Clad in general terms and avoiding details, this description applies also to later times. For in the first centuries of our era Chinese domestic life was settling down to a more or less fixed pattern which, *mutatis mutandis*, it has retained till recent years.

An age-old tradition stressed the importance of the family as one self-contained social unit, and economic factors contributed to the unit's expansion and maintenance. The power of the family as a unit lay in mutual dependence and mutual assistance: the more numerous its members, the more facilities there were for supporting each other, and the more opportunities for promoting each other's interests. If a newly-married son set up his own separate household,

he lost the support and security which living in the parental house granted him, and he at the same time weakened the power of the family. In doing so he would moreover gravely offend against the rules of filial piety; he and his wives and concubines ought to stay in the paternal house to serve the father and mother and elder male relatives. Contrary to the West, in China the various married and unmarried members of upper class families tried to live together as closely as possible and hence those families tended to increase in size. Those of artisans, small merchants and especially the peasantry showed on the contrary a tendency to split up in a number of separate units.

Upper and middle class houses were in fact compounds containing a number of separate households, each with its own quarters and its own servants, but forming together one closely knit community.

If the father and sons were officials, they would be busy in their offices the greater part of the day, and if they were merchants they would be from dawn till dark in their shops, mostly situated at some distance from the house. Therefore the numerous women of the house were left to themselves most of the time.

Each woman had her appointed place in the household hierarchy, the maids obeyed the concubines, the concubines the wives, the wives the principal wives and all without exception the First Lady, the principal wife of the father, or if she died, the principal wife of the eldest son. In her own sphere of influence—the conduct of the household routine, the education of the young children, management of the servants—the principal wife had nearly as much authority as her husband. Each woman also had her appointed task in the household, which kept her busy at least part of the day, and seasonal feasts supplied opportunities for indoor amusements such as family dinners with pantomimes and music, and—but less frequently—for excursions outside the house, such as visits to temples and the yearly visits to the family tombs outside the city, usually combined with picnics *al fresco*. A great amount of time was also killed by leisurely attending to their toilet. Plate III shows a section of a hand scroll entitled *Nü-shih-chên* "Admonitions of the Instructress of the Palace", signed by the famous painter Ku K'ai-chih who flourished ca. 400 A.D. There we see a Court lady doing up the hair of an Imperial Consort who is kneeling on a sitting-mat in front of a round mirror, suspended on an elaborate stand. Note the lacquer boxes with toilet articles in the foreground.

The women of the household also played together various games of skill and chance, later also all kinds of cardgames, and dominos. Their husband they met only at meal times, and the only place where they could talk with him in comparative privacy was the bed. As was remarked already above, the bed was really a small room in itself. Plate IV, another section of Ku

K'ai-chih's hand scroll, shows what such a bedstead looked like ca. 400 A.D. It is a kind of cage made of wooden panels the lower half of which is of solid wood while the upper part consists of lattice-work. Two of the four panels in front open like a door. The "cage" stands on a wooden platform about two feet high, and along the top are curtains which when drawn render the inside completely invisible. In front of the bedstead stands a long, narrow bench, apparently used for sitting on when taking off the slippers and shedding the robes. On the picture the husband is sitting on that bench, talking to his wife who is already inside.

This Chinese bedstead may be compared with an old Japanese one called *kā-chō* as used in the Imperial Palace ca. 1000 A.D., and shown on Plate V, reproduced from the *Tankaku-zufu* (a fine collection of colourprints representing garments and utensils of ancient times, published by Mizuno Tadanaka in 1847). It consisted of a raised dais of lacquered wood, covered with a thick mat. Round it was placed a frame, also of lacquered wood, and shown on the lower half of the plate. Over this frame were then hung the curtains which came down on all four sides like a kind of baldachin. It may be assumed that this type of bedstead is a fairly close copy of beds used in China during the Liu-ch'ao period. Attention may be drawn to the two bronze lions, put on the left and right ends of the curtains. These are "floor incense-burners" in the shape of a *suan-ni*, a fabulous animal half lion, half dragon, that is supposed to like smoke. The floor incense burners were used for scenting and purifying the robes of those passing by them. They are frequently mentioned in old Chinese literature, their technical name being *hsiang-shou*, "incense-quadrupeds"; cf. the poem by Li Yü, translated on page 214. Here they seem to serve the double purpose of preventing the curtains from being blown aside by draughts. In China they have become obsolete but in Japan they survive in incense burners shaped like an elephant which stand on the floor near the entrance of Buddhist temples, to purify the robes of the worshippers before they enter the main hall.

In this monotonous life gossip, petty intrigue and quarrelling provided a much-needed diversion. Most differences among the women were settled by the First Lady, who could have persons whipped and given other light punishments. If larger issues were involved, the husband's authority was referred to. Customary law allowed him judicial authority, he could in grave cases such as for instance adultery of one of his women with a male servant, summarily execute both offenders. If he could not decide a matter, he could bring it before the clan-elders, while on a lower social level, for instance that of small merchants or artisans, recourse could be had to the head of their guild.

If members of other families were involved, such as in divorce cases, one

tried to settle the matter amicably by mutual consultation among the heads of the families concerned, or in more delicate cases by invoking the intermediary of a third party respected by both families.

Only as the very last resort, and when all other attempts had failed, was the matter brought before the judicial authorities. The laws were harsh and so was court-procedure, both being meant primarily as a deterrent to prospective offenders. The fact alone that one had to appear before the tribunal was considered a disgrace, no matter whether one was defendant or accused, innocent or guilty. No decent and self-respecting citizen was supposed ever to come into contact with the law.¹

As regards divorce, the husband had the right to repudiate his wife, and send her back to her own family. In the period under discussion this was not taken as a disgrace—provided of course that the wife had not committed a major offense. Divorced wives and even widows could and did often marry again; cf. the case of Szû-ma Hsiang-ju's elopement with a young widow, mentioned above. In the 12th century and later, however, when Confucianist moral standards had asserted themselves, divorced women were considered as forever disgraced, and widows were not supposed to remarry.

Concubines found themselves in a more difficult position, for they came mostly from poor families who would hardly welcome an extra mouth to feed. Repudiated concubines therefore often drifted to the oldest profession—the only one then open to women. As long as they were members of the household, however, their position and rights were well protected by common law; they were fully entitled to the protection and support of their master, and their children to a share in the family fortune.

When a newly-married wife entered her husband's family, she could not fail to feel herself an intruder, and it usually took some time before she had adapted herself to the situation. During those difficult first few months her husband could not give her full support, for he could never take her side against his own relatives, and certainly not against his parents. Neither could she turn for help and advice to her own family, for those ties were definitely cut off upon her marriage. On the third day after the wedding she paid the customary visit to her own parents (*kuei-ning*), thereafter she was not supposed ever to see them again. It is not for nothing that the Lady Pan devotes in her Precepts so much space to the wife's relations with her husband's family. However, the living in close proximity had given all members of the household a larger or lesser degree of tolerance and in all large families there reigned as

¹ For details about the Old Chinese administration of justice cf. my book "T'ang-yin-pi-shih, Parallel Cases from under the Pear-tree, a 13th century manual of Jurisprudence and Detection", *Sinica Leidensia* vol. X, Leyden 1956.

a rule a spirit of give-and-take. Thus before long the wife would find herself completely integrated in the household. And after she had born her husband a child, especially if it was a boy, her position was securely established.

Thereafter she was still faced with the task of effecting numerous emotional adjustments. She had to find a mutually acceptable equation between her love for her husband and his affection for and duties to his concubines, and she had to determine her own attitude to the antipathies and sympathies—often of sapphic character—existing among the women in the household in general. There were doubtless often sharp conflicts and not seldom appalling tragedies. Yet an examination of old and later literature leads to the conclusion that there are grounds for assuming that the average Chinese woman was not less happy or more unhappy than her average Western sisters who lived according to the monogamic system.

On the other hand there neither is reason to suppose that the average Chinese householder was happier than his average Western counterpart who was entitled to one wife only. Our traditional habit of referring in common parlance to the polygamic system in a spirit of levity has given the general public the mistaken impression that a harem is a man's paradise. This may hold true to a certain extent for primitive and less cultured societies where the man only asks for carnal love and where the harem inmates are treated like caged animals, but certainly not for a highly developed civilization like the Chinese. In China wives and concubines had a definite status and vested individual rights, fixed by both statutory and common law. The householder had to respect those rights, and fulfil his many duties to his womenfolk, not only in giving them sexual satisfaction and supporting them economically, but also in the more subtle field of personal affection, consideration for individual preferences and foibles, and an understanding of the relations among the women themselves. If the householder was deficient in one of those duties, bedlam would result. And this failure to maintain a harmonious household could ruin a man's reputation and break his career. A scholar-official might lose his position, for the ancient maxim that a man who can not keep his own house in order is unfit to occupy a responsible position, was constantly in the minds of the higher authorities. And a merchant might thereby lose his credit, for it was well known that a badly managed household is the root of financial difficulties.

In my opinion the main reason why the handbooks of sex continued to enjoy such wide popularity with both Confucianists and Taoists was that those text-books of love answered a real need. Without their guidance, the head of a large family could hardly have managed his numerous womenfolk without becoming a nervous wreck. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the

sixth century A.D. these books are still openly referred to among the literati. I quote the following passage from a letter written by the great poet Hsü Ling (507–583 A.D.) in answer to his friend Chou Hung-jang (flourished ca. 550):

Reverently unfolding your precious letter I found its contents a great consolation. You have returned to the T'ien-mu mountains and are living there in comfortable leisure. You have with you a Nung-yü to assist you in becoming an Immortal and you are not without a Mêng-kuang to keep you company in your retirement. Together you two can freely engage in all the various positions and thoroughly practise what is taught in the Classic of the Plain Girl, perfecting the descending and ascending movement; together with your partner you can exhaust the art¹ displayed in the pictures of the Yellow Emperor. Although you are living there in a small hut you need not pass your nights alone. Why should you trouble with the Pill of Immortality, while you can drink from the Jade Fountain?

(*Hsü-hsiao-mu-chi*, SPTK edition, ch. 7 page 1)

Nung-yü is the name of the female companion of the legendary musician Hsiao-shih; he taught her to play the flute and, later, the pair disappeared into the sky riding on Phoenix birds. Mêng-kuang was the wife of the Han recluse Liang Hung (cf. BD no. 1247). This passage proves again that the handbooks were illustrated, and taught i.a. how to exercise the sexual act so as to benefit one's health and attain longevity. To drink from the "Jade Fountain" (*yü-ch'üan*) is, as we shall see below, a common expression for obtaining the *yin*-essence from a woman during the sexual act.

The sexual disciplines found many adherents also at the courts of the minor dynasties then ruling the south. I translate here a verse by Pao Chao (ca. 421–ca. 465 A.D.), a prominent poet of that period, where he describes the experiments in sexual alchemy conducted by the Prince Hai-nan. The Emperor wished to learn these secrets from him, but the Prince refused and fled.

The Prince of Hai-nan,
He longs for longevity,
He follows a diet, controls his breathing,
reads the Book of the Immortals.
In crystal cups and ivory bowls
With a golden crucible and a jade spoon
he mixes the Elixir.
Mixing the Elixir,

¹ Instead of *i* "art", other editions read *shih* "postures".

He sports in the Purple Chamber.
 The Purple Chamber,
 Where the Elected Girl jingles her earrings.
 The female Phoenix chants, the male Phoenix follows—
 And despair comes as the end.

(*Yü-t'ai-hsin-yung*)

Next to the reference to the Elected Girl (*ts'ai* is here again written with the 120th radical), also the "golden crucible" and the "jade spoon" may have sexual connotations.

It should be noted that the term "Purple Chamber", *tzü-fang*, in Taoist technical terminology also denotes part of the "Nine Palaces" into which the human body is divided. At the same time, however, it indicates the room where the adept engages in the sexual disciplines. The same applies to "Jade Chamber", *yü-fang*, often occurring in the titles of sexological texts (e.g. the *Yü-fang-pi-chüeh* mentioned below), and to "Mysterious Room", *tung-fang*; the latter term, *tung-fang*, survives today as a common expression for the room where a newly-married couple passes the wedding-night.

It must go to the credit of the handbooks of sex that next to the various aspects of carnal love they also taught man consideration for the women's feelings, and an understanding for their different status in life and the resulting problems. It is significant that almost all poems that lament the fate of woman were written by men. While during the Han dynasty the Lady Pan, a woman, stressed in her Precepts woman's low estate, now there arose many men who stressed the injustice of this. I translate here a poem by the well-known scholar-official Fu Hsüan (217-278 A.D.) which breathes an atmosphere completely different from that of the Lady Pan's Precepts.

Bitter indeed it is to be born a woman,
 It is difficult to imagine anything so low!
 Boys can stand openly at the front gate,
 They are treated like gods as soon as they are born.
 Their manly spirit bounded only by the Four Seas,
 Ten thousand miles they go, braving storm and dust.
 But a girl is reared without joy or love,
 And no one in her family really cares for her.
 Grown up, she has to hide in the inner rooms,
 Cover her head, be afraid to look others in the face.
 And no one sheds a tear when she is married off,
 All ties with her own kin are abruptly severed.
 With bowed head she tries to compose her face,

Her white teeth biting her scarlet lips.
 Now she has to bow and kneel times uncounted,
 Behave humbly even with maids and concubines.
 Her husband's love is as aloof as the Milky Way,
 Yet she must follow him like a sunflower the sun.
 Their hearts are soon as far apart as fire and water,
 She is blamed for all and everything that goes wrong.
 In a few years her gentle face will have changed,
 As her husband often goes after new loves.
 While at first they were as close as shape and shadow,
 Now they are as far apart as Chinese and Huns.
 But whilst even Chinese and Huns do sometimes meet,
 Husband and wife stay as far apart as Lucifer and Orion.

(*Yü-t'ai-hsin-yung*)

Of the many poets of the San-kuo and Liu-ch'ao periods who liked to write on behalf of women verses describing their sorrows, I mention only Ts'ao P'ei (187-226), the second Emperor of the Wei dynasty, canonized as Wên-ti. He wrote i.a. a well known parting-poem in which the wife of the general Liu Hsün addresses the curtain of the conjugal bedstead. After she had been married to the general for twenty years, he fell in love with another woman and sent his wife back to her paternal home, on the pretext that she had not given him a son.

Fluttering curtain that hung before our bedstead,
 You were put there to screen us from the too harsh light.
 Long ago I brought you when I left my father's house,
 Now I am taking you back again to where I came from.
 I shall store you away carefully in my clothes-box—
 For when shall I have occasion to unroll you again?

(*Yü-t'ai-hsin-yung*)

Learned women were still exceptions, it was as a rule only the courtezans who had a smattering of reading and writing. This is the second reason why most poems describing a woman's feelings were still written by men. The *Chin-shu* mentions in ch. 96 one woman who is said to have been an accomplished poetess. This was Su Hui, styled Jo-lan who ca. 350 A.D. was the principal wife of a prefect of the Chin Dynasty, called Tou Tao. Her husband was fond of her because of her beauty and erudition, but he also greatly loved one of his concubines called Chao Yang-t'ai who excelled in singing and danc-

ing. Once Su Hui gave in a fit of jealousy that concubine a whipping, and when her husband was transferred she refused to accompany him, whereupon he took his concubine along. Later Su Hui repented, and composed a complicated poetical palindrome of 841 characters, which she embroidered in very small script and sent to her husband. He was so touched by this mark of her devotion that he effected a reconciliation.

Finally, a few words may be said here about Buddhism, although at this time it did not yet exercise much influence on Chinese sexual life. Introduced into China in the beginning of the Later Han period, Buddhism made great headway during that of the Six Dynasties. The north became under the Toba or Wei dynasty a stronghold of Buddhism, in the south first Taoism predominated but then also had to give way to the increasing pressure of Buddhist propaganda from the north.

Buddhism had been introduced into China in its Mahāyānic form, including such magical aspects as that embodied in the Mantrayāna, the "Doctrine of Spells". The Mantrayanic spells and charms proved to be attractive to both the Chinese literati and to the masses, it appealed to them as a kind of glorified Taoism. Buddhist monks acted as mediums, rain-makers, soothsayers and exorcists, and also Buddhist nuns engaged in these activities. The performance of a Buddhist nun as soothsayer is described in a curious passage occurring in the biography of the great general Huan Wên (312-373 A.D.), found in ch. 98 of the Dynastic History of the Ch'in period. There it is said:

"At that time there was a Buddhist nun (*bhikṣuṇī*) from a far-away place, famous for her magical arts (lit.: "arts of Tao"). When (prior to being consulted by Huan) she was taking a bath in a side room, Huan Wên spied on her as she was naked and saw that she first split open her belly with a knife and thereafter cut off her feet. When she made her appearance after the bath, Huan Wên asked her to tell his fortune. The nun said: 'If you would become Emperor, you would find yourself in the same condition as I' (i.e. "better give up your plans for usurping the throne").

This took place ca. 350 A.D. Unfortunately the text is so brief that the implications are not clear. The operation which the nun did on herself seems rather drastic, but probably it means that her magical power was so great that she could afford thus to mutilate herself without being any the worse for it. Neither is it clear what *yüan-fang* "a far-away place" means. It might refer to India. But she may as well have been a Chinese nun, because at about that time (i.e. 350 A.D.) the first Buddhist nunneries had been established in Lo-yang and Nanking. The purification by bathing before the ceremony, and then the self-mutilation while being naked seem shamanistic traits.

The Chinese literati evinced deep interest also in the carefully elaborated philosophical systems of Mahāyānic esoterism. These included speculations about the male and female cosmic principles, not unlike the Chinese theories about *yin* and *yang*, and which in India in the seventh and eighth centuries developed into the sexual mysticism of the Tantras. Whereas this subject will be taken up in greater detail in Appendix I of the present volume, here it may be remarked already that those Chinese students of Buddhist texts, though familiar with the Chinese handbooks of sex, to the best of my knowledge never mentioned having found similar theories on sexual mysticism in Indian books. This fact constitutes in my opinion strong proof that at that time Tantrism did not yet exist in India.

Although the Buddhist texts introduced into China did not yet refer to woman's superior position as instructress in the arcana of sex, those books did stress at least that woman must be considered as man's equal. This was one of the fundamental points on which Buddha's teachings differed from Hinduism, and as such the men who translated the Buddhist texts into Chinese did not dare to gloss it over—even though they knew that such theories would excite the ire of orthodox Confucianists. Through this insistence upon woman being equal to man, Buddhism promoted the enhancing of women's position in China, exactly as Taoism did. It should be noted, however, that apart from major ideological issues like the position of women, the early translators (i.e. up to the T'ang period) tried to spare as much as possible Confucianist sensibilities; they glossed over, for instance, Sanskrit passages about love-making and prostitution.¹ When later, during the T'ang dynasty, Chinese Buddhism was flourishing, and when the erotic Tantric texts had been introduced from India and generally accepted by the Chinese, such scruples were no longer necessary; hence the translations made at that time keep much closer to the Indian originals. It was not until the Southern Sung period when Neo-Confucianism became triumphant that a drastic expurgation of Buddhist texts was inaugurated.

Returning now to the period treated in this chapter, it may be added that in the sixth century the influence of Buddhism declined. Then Wu-ti, Emperor of the Northern Chou dynasty (557–581 A.D.) declared that of the *san-chiao*, the "Three Religions", Confucianism came first, then Taoism, and last of all Buddhism. And in 579 A.D., when he was beginning to plan to create a

¹ Cf. Nakamura Hajime's informative article "The influence of Confucian ethics on the Chinese translations of Buddhist sutras" (in: Liebenthal Festschrift, Santiniketan 1957). Also Chou I-liang's article "Tantrism in China" (in: Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, vol. VIII, 1945), which in Appendix R shows the modifications of the story about the Bodhisattva who descended into the world as a prostitute.

new, re-united China, he proscribed Buddhism, and made Confucianism the official creed of his reign.

After Wu-ti's death, one of his generals called Yang Chien—a descendant of the staunch Confucianist Yang Chên mentioned on page 86 above—overthrew the Northern Chou dynasty, expanded his territory in a series of campaigns, and in 590 proclaimed himself the first Emperor of the Sui dynasty, which was to rule a re-unified China from 590 to 618 A.D.—a brief term but which sufficed for laying the foundations of the glorious T'ang dynasty that came after it.

CHAPTER SIX

SUI DYNASTY

581-618 A.D.

THIRD PART

THE HEYDAY OF EMPIRE

Sui, T'ang and Sung Periods, 590-1279 A.D.

The Handbooks of Sex, their popularity and decline

THE RITZ OF EMPIRE

and Tang and Sung Periods, 590-1279 A.D.

The standards of style, their popularity and decline

CHAPTER SIX

SUI DYNASTY

590–618 A.D.

Yang Chien, the first Emperor of the short-lived Sui dynasty, was a strong and able ruler who took energetic measures to restore peace and order in the re-united Empire. He made a number of useful administrative reforms, but he did not do much for a re-organization of the civil service of scholar-officials—hence Chinese official histories show little sympathy for him.

His son who succeeded him in 604, and who is known as Yang-ti, was as ambitious as his father, but of a more erratic mind and given to extravagance. He tried to consolidate the administration by restoring the Han system of recruiting officials from among the Confucianist scholars, and instituted competitive examinations in the capital which gave successful candidates the rank of *chin-shih* “advanced scholar”. Throughout the following centuries this coveted rank has opened the door to high office.

Yang-ti had various great public works executed, and improved i.a. the network of canals and waterways. But since he did this mainly by forced labour it excited discontent among the people. He also built a number of luxurious palaces and pleasure grounds which were another drain on the economic resources of the country which had not yet recovered from the military ravages of the turbulent preceding period. Unsuccessful but costly expeditions to Korea worsened the situation, and revolts broke out all over the country. The Emperor retired to his palace in Yangchow, and there gave himself over to sensual pleasures. In 618 he was killed, and soon afterwards Li Yüan, one of the revolting generals, founded the T'ang dynasty.

Many tales are told about Yang-ti's debauchery. It is said that he had special narrow carriages made with lying space for only one person, in which he deflorated virgins. Also that he had mirror-screens of polished bronze placed all around his couch when he was having sexual intercourse with his women, and that his hall was hung with paintings showing naked men and women engaged in the sexual act.¹ However, Yang-ti is the black sheep of

¹ Cf. the *Mi-lou-chi* “Record of the Maze Palace”, a brief account of the extravagances of Yang-ti, written by an anonymous T'ang author, and the *Ta-yeh-shih-i-chi* by the T'ang writer Yen Shih-ku (581–645).

吳絳仙



Figure 4

Wu Chiang-hsien, one of Yang-ti's favourite Consorts, painting her eyebrows
From the Ch'ing blockprint Po-mei-hsin-yung, author's collection
Dress is Southern Sung rather than Sui

the Chinese historians, and his debaucheries may be exaggerated. He is the hero of more than one Ming pornographic novel, where his licentious adventures are described in great detail.

However this may be, the license reigning at a tottering court can not be taken as standard for the life of the people in general, there is no reason for assuming that morals had deteriorated compared to the preceding period.

Buddhism was still popular in court circles, but Confucianism started to reassert itself as a consequence of the increasing importance of the civil service. Taoism continued to flourish among the masses.

The handbooks of sex were as popular as during the preceding centuries. Unlike the bibliographical section of the Han history, the corresponding section in the Dynastic History of the Sui period does not devote a special category to books on the Art of the Bedchamber. At the end of the heading "Medical books", however, several titles of handbooks of sex are listed. I mention the following eight items.

1. *Su-nü-pi-tao-ching* "Classic of the Secret Methods of the Plain Girl", in one book roll. Appended: *Hsüan-nü-ching* "Handbook of Sex of the Dark Girl".
2. *Su-nü-fang* "Recipes of the Plain Girl", in I book roll.
3. *P'êng-tsu-yang-hsing* "P'êng-tsu on Nurturing Nature", in I book roll.
4. *Hsü-fang-nei-pi-shu* "Preface to the Secret Art of the Bedchamber", by Mr. Ko, I book roll.
5. *Yü-fang-pi-chüeh* "Secret Prescriptions for the Bedchamber", in 8 book rolls.
6. ditto, new edition, in 9 book rolls.
7. *Fang-nei-pi-yao* "Summary of the Secrets of the Bedchamber", by Hsü T'ai-shan, I book roll.
8. *T'ang-shêng-yao-chi* "Principles of Nurturing Life", by Chang Chan, in 10 book rolls.

Furthermore, ch. 35 states under the heading "Taoist Classics" that among these books there were 13 items dealing with the Art of the Bedchamber, totalling 38 book rolls; but the titles of these books are not listed.

The original texts of the eight items listed above are all lost in China.¹

¹ Of the *Su-nü-ching* and *Su-nü-fang* only a thoroughly expurgated and mutilated version has been preserved which gives little more than a list of diseases and medicines for curing them. Cf. the edition of 1810 by the famous text-critic Sun Hsing-yen (1753-1818) and published in 1885 in the *P'ing-chin-kuan-ts'ung-shu*. Sun Hsing-yen also edited a text called *Hsüan-nü-ching* "Classic of the Dark Girl" (published 1884) which is a kind of calendar of propitious days for concluding marriages. The same text is found in SF, under the title *Tai-i-ching*. SF also prints a *Hsüan-nü-fang-chung-ching* "Classic on the Bedchamber by the Dark Girl", which is nothing but a list of dates suitable for sexual

However, by a fortunate chance, longer fragments of nos. 1, 2 and 5, and some passages from no. 8, together with extensive quotations from other Chinese handbooks of sex of the Liu-ch'ao, Sui and T'ang periods have been preserved in Japan. It is therefore possible to proceed now with our discussion of the ancient handbooks of sex on the basis of actual texts.

These fragments are to be found in the Japanese work *I-shin-pô* (Chinese: *I-hsin-fang*), a voluminous compendium of medical science in 30 parts. This work consists of extracts from several hundred Chinese works of the T'ang period and earlier, collected and classified by Tamba Yasuyori, a famous Japanese physician of Chinese descent. He began this work in 982 and completed it in 984. For many centuries this book circulated only in manuscript form. In 1854 a Japanese physician attached to the Shōgun's harem called Taki Genkin (died 1857) published a magnificent large blockprint based on the best manuscripts.

Here we are concerned only with Part 28 of the *I-shin-fang*, entitled *Fang-nei* "The Bedchamber". This part consists entirely of quotations relating to the Art of the Bedchamber culled from a number of ancient Chinese texts including handbooks of sex, ancient medical treatises, books on physiognomy, collections of recipes, etc. Since most of these works are preserved nowhere else, this text is of incalculable value.

Tamba Yasuyori was a most conscientious scholar. He reproduced the passages he selected exactly as he found them in the original manuscripts brought over from China, not correcting even obvious errors, abbreviations and repetitions. The later Japanese copyists took this same attitude of scrupulous respect for ancient texts, in accordance with the best Japanese scholarly tradition; they marked corrupt passages by adding marginal notes, but left the text itself intact. As a result this text has retained all features of the original T'ang manuscripts. This is proved by a comparison of this text with documents of similar nature discovered in Tun-huang, as for instance the *Ta-lo-fu* (see below); these texts mutually corroborate and explain each other.

The pioneer work on the *I-shin-fang* was done by the modern Chinese scholar Yeh Tê-hui (1864-1927) who used the 1854 edition. Scattered over Part 28 Yeh Tê-hui found five ancient Chinese handbooks of sex quoted so extensively by Tamba that he thought it possible to reconstruct the main part of the original text on the basis of these fragments. Thus in 1914 Yeh published the following four works mentioned in the Sui Dynastic History:

intercourse, copied after the *Ch'ien-chin-fang*, the medical work by the T'ang physician Sun Szu-mo discussed in Chapter VII below. In Sun Hsing-yen's *Su-ni-ching* a few passages can still be identified as remnants of the original text, but the other treatises mentioned as connected with Hsüan-nü have nothing in common with the original *Hsüan-nü-ching*, the old handbook of sex.

Su-nü-ching, also incorporating the *Hsüan-nü-ching* (item 1)

Su-nü-fang (item 2)

Yü-fang-pi-chüeh (items 5 and 6)

Yü-fang-chih-yao (probably identical with item 7).

In addition Yeh Tê-hui reconstructed the text called *Tung-hsüan-tzû*, "The Ars Amatoria of Master Tung-hsüan". This important text is mentioned for the first time in the Bibliographical Section of the T'ang Dynastic History. H. Maspero thinks that "Tung-hsüan" refers to the scholar Li Tung-hsüan, who in the middle of the 7th century occupied the post of director of the School of Medicine in the capital (cf. Maspero's article in "Journal Asiatique" quoted above, page 383). If this identification is correct, Li did not more than edit the text, for style and content point to the Liu-ch'ao period.

These five handbooks of sex are published in Yeh Tê-hui's *Shuang-mei-ching-an-ts'ung-shu* (compilation started in 1903, completed blockprint published 1914). He thereby greatly offended contemporary old-fashioned literati and his reputation as a scholar was promptly ruined. So much so that even his tragic end—he was murdered by bandits—failed to evoke much sympathy. This bigoted attitude is all the more significant since Chinese scholars as a rule take a praiseworthy broad view in literary matters. They are wont to judge a man's scholarship by quality, ignoring moral shortcomings or political errors. But sex is the exception. As soon as a scholar dares to write on this particular subject he is immediately ostracized. These facts are eloquent proof how badly ensnared Chinese literati of the Ch'ing period had become in their own sexual inhibitions.

It is worthwhile to note in passing the ironical fact that Yeh Tê-hui was as old-fashioned as the literati who branded him with the *hic niger est*. He stated in the prefaces of the handbooks reconstructed by him that he was attempting to show, by publishing these texts, that the Chinese knew centuries before everything contained in modern Western works.

Yeh Tê-hui's publications prove that, apart from his disdain for Western science, he was a widely-read and conscientious scholar. This is attested also by the way he handled the five texts under discussion.

He assumed that the sequence of the 30 headings of Chapter 28 of the *I-hsin-fang* roughly indicated the order of the contents of an ancient handbook on sex. Therefore in his reconstructions he arranged the quotations according to this sequence. It appears that nearly all of the old handbooks were divided into six sections, viz.:

- A. Introductory remarks on the cosmic significance of the sexual union, and its importance for the health of both partners.

- B. A description of sexual play preliminary to the act.
- C. The sexual act itself. The technique of the coitus, including the various positions in which the act can be consummated.
- D. The therapeutic aspect of the sexual act.
- E. Sexual selection, prenatal care and eugenics.
- F. Various recipes and prescriptions.

In Yeh Tê-hui's reconstructions, the various quotations from one and the same treatise are arranged within this framework. It is, of course, impossible to say how much of the complete original is represented by these reconstructions. The *Tung-hsüan-tzû* gives the impression of being a complete text, while the *Su-nü-ching* and the *Su-nü-fang* are apparently complete but for a few minor lacunae. All of these three works are listed as having consisted of only one book roll, and their present size as reconstructed corresponds roughly to that of one chapter of an ancient book. The *Yü-fang-pi-chüeh*, however, can represent but a small part of the original text, since according to the Sui History it consisted of no less than 8 book rolls (9 in the revised edition, and 10 in the list of the T'ang Dynastic History). If the *Yü-fang-chih-yao* is identical with the *Fang-wei-pi-yao* of the Sui History, it consisted of only one book roll; but the few quotations in the *I-hsin-fang* are insufficient even for one chapter.

Notwithstanding the fact that the bibliographical lists occasionally give author's names (Mr. Ko, Chang Chan, Hsü T'ai-shan etc.), the handbooks of sex were no individual productions; the scholars mentioned as their "authors" were rather "editors". These handbooks were collections of pronouncements, often written in verse, culled from various older treatises, perhaps dating from before the Han period. In my opinion we may safely assume that, if the handbooks of sex listed in the Han Dynastic History had been preserved, their contents would prove to be practically identical with those of the handbooks quoted in the *I-hsin-fang*.

Aside from the five works reconstructed by Yeh Tê-hui, the *I-hsin-fang* also quotes the following books:

- (a) *Yang-shêng-yao-chi*, listed in the Sui History; cf. item 8 on page 121 above. This book is probably lost. It is mentioned, however, in the list of works consulted in 977 A.D. for the compilation of the huge Sung compendium of literary reference, the *T'ai-p'ing-yü-lan*.
- (b) *Ch'ien-chün-fang* "Priceless Recipes", a medical work of the T'ang Dynasty; cf. below.
- (c) *Pao-p'u-tzû*, the works of Ko Hung quoted above.

- (d) *Tai-ch'ing-ching*. This is the *Tai ch'ing-shên-chien*, a famous old handbook of physiognomy.
- (e) *Hua-t'o Chên-chiu-ching* "Handbook of Acupuncture and Moxibustion of Dr. Hua T'o". For Hua T'o see page 71 above.
- (f) (*Huang-ti*) *hsia-ma-ching*, a work on the same subject as the preceding item.

These works are only quoted in a limited number of citations.

Below is a translation of the *Tung-hsüan-tzû*. A perusal of this text will give the reader an idea of style and content of the ancient Chinese handbooks of sex.

THE ARS AMATORIA OF MASTER TUNG-HSÜAN

I

"Master Tung-hsüan said: Of all the ten thousand things created by Heaven, man is the most precious. Of all things that make man prosper none can be compared to sexual intercourse. It is modelled after Heaven and takes its pattern by Earth, it regulates Yin and rules Yang. Those who understand its significance can nurture their nature and prolong their years; those who miss its true meaning will harm themselves and die before their time.

II

"Now the methods of sexual intercourse as taught by the Dark Girl have been transmitted since antiquity; but they give only a general survey of this subject, they do not exhaust its subtle mysteries. When contemplating these prescriptions I often thought of supplementing their lacunae. Gathering usages and established manners I now have compiled this new handbook. Although it does not give all finer nuances, I yet hope that it contains the essentials. The various ways of sitting and lying together; the postures of stretching and opening the legs; the diverse ways of adjusting the body, and the methods for deep and shallow penetration, all these comprise the Reason of the sexual union and supply the Rhythm of the five elements. Those who let themselves be guided by these rules will attain longevity. Those who act contrary to them will come to harm and perish. How should that which is of advantage to all not be transmitted for ten thousand generations?

III

"Master Tung-hsüan said: Truly Heaven revolves to the left and Earth revolves to the right. Thus the four seasons succeed each other, man calls and woman follows, above there is action and below compliance; this is the natural

order of all things. If the man moves and the woman does not respond, or if the woman is roused and the man does not comply, then the sexual act will not only injure the man but also harm the woman, for this runs counter to the established relation between Yin and Yang. If they unite themselves in such a way neither of the partners to the act will derive benefit from it. Therefore, man and woman must move according to their cosmic orientation, the man should thrust from above and the woman receive below. If they unite in this way, it can be called Heaven and Earth in even balance.

IV

"Deep and shallow, slow and quick, straight and slanting thrusts, all these are by no means uniform, each has its own characteristics. A slow thrust should resemble the movement of a carp caught on the hook; a quick thrust should resemble the flight of birds against the wind. Inserting and withdrawing, moving up and down and from left to right, interspaced by intervals or in quick succession, all these movements should be properly correlated. One must apply each of them at the proper time and not always stubbornly cling to one style alone to serve one's convenience.

V

"When a man and a woman have intercourse for the first time, the man should sit down at the woman's left side and the woman should sit on the man's right. Then the man crosses his legs and places the woman in his lap. He presses her slender waist, he caresses her precious body, he whispers endearing words and engages in passionate discourse. Both being of the same mind, they hug and embrace—their bodies close together and their lips pressed against each other. The man sucks the woman's lower lip, the woman sucks the man's upper lip. They kiss each other, feeding on each other's saliva. Or the man softly bites the woman's tongue or gnaws her lips a little, places her head in his hands and pinches her ears. Thus patting and kissing a thousand charms will unfold and the hundred sorrows will be forgotten. Next, the man should let the woman hold his Jade Stalk in her left hand while he strokes her Jade Gate with his right. When this is done, the man will sense her Yin *ch'i* and his Jade Stalk will rise. It will stand erect, projecting into the air like the solitary peak of a mountain which reaches up to the Milky Way. The woman will sense his Yang *ch'i*, and the Cinnabar Gully will be moistened with an abundant emission of fluid like a solitary spring of water emerging from a deep valley. This is the spontaneous reaction of Yin and Yang which can never be achieved by artificial means. As soon as the pair has reached this stage they are in a

condition fit for uniting with each other. If the man's penis does not want to become erect, or if the woman's vagina cannot become wet, these are the outward signs of some interior illness.

VI

"Master Tung-hsüan said: When a man and a woman have sexual intercourse they should always begin by sitting as described above and only thereafter lie down together, the woman on the left and the man on the right. When they are lying in this manner, the man should turn the woman on her back and spread her legs. He should mount her and kneel between her thighs.¹ Soon he should insert his Jade Stalk between the outer lips of the Jade Gate in the shaded region that looks like a drooping pine tree placed in front of a deep cave. His penis should play in this vestibule while he continuously speaks erotic words and sucks her tongue with his mouth. The man should either look at her beautiful face or look down on the Golden Gully from above. He should caress her stomach and nipples, and stroke her Jade Terrace. As this is done, the man will burn with passion and the woman will be out of her mind. Then the man should move his Positive Peak up and down, rubbing the Jade Veins with it from top to bottom and rubbing the Golden Gully from bottom to top. His penis should play throughout the Examination Hall until it finally rests on the right part of the Jade Terrace. All these movements should take place on the outside, before he enters the vagina.²

VII

When the woman's Cinnabar Gully overflows with bountiful fluid, let the Positive Peak penetrate her there. It will emit a liquid which will mix with the woman's saliva so as to soak the Sacred Field from the top and the Shaded Valley from the bottom. Then the man should thrust vigorously and go in and out of the vagina at a fast pace. This will make the woman go mad with lust and beg for his mercy. When this happens, the man should remove his penis and wipe the woman's vagina as well as his penis with a linen cloth. Afterwards, he should insert his Jade Stalk anew deep into the Cinnabar Gully until he

¹ The text says *femina*, which must be a typographical error for *femora*. [PRG]

² In 1931 a small collection of notes similar to those contained in the *I-hsin-fang* was printed in the large Japanese collection *Zoku Gunsho-ruijū*. These notes are entitled *Eisei-hiyōshō* "Important notes on hygiene", compiled by the statesman Fujihara Kinpira (1264-1315 A.D.), and presented to the Court in 1288 by the physician Tamba Yukinaga. Section 18 gives a list of terms relating to the sexual act quoted in the *Tung-hsüan-tzū*, with additional explanations and Japanese *kana*-readings. These proved that some of my identifications given in ECP are incorrect. The "Jewel Terrace", *ju-t'ai*, is the clitoris (Japanese *hinasaki*, written with the two characters *ch'u-chien* "chicken's tongue"); the "Jade Veins", *yii-li*, indicate the place where the labia meet below the vulva; the "Golden Gully", *chin-kou*, indicates the upper part the vulva; and the "Examination Hall", *pi-yung*, the right and left sides. Here my translation is corrected accordingly.

touches the Yang Terrace. His penis should be like a solid rock which blocks a low-lying valley. Then he should start thrusting his penis and alternate nine shallow thrusts with single thrusts which penetrate deep into the vagina. The man should vary his movements so as to be slow and quick, deep and shallow, following a good rhythm of twenty-one breaths.

VIII

Next the man repeats the quick thrusts that penetrate deeply while the woman follows his movements and imitates his rhythm. Once he has entered the Grain-Shaped Cave with his Positive Peak, he should thrust into its depths. When he has explored that region for a little while, he should slowly change to short thrusts. The man should withdraw his penis when the woman's vagina is full of liquid and she has come to orgasm. He should never withdraw the penis when it begins to go limp. Let him withdraw it when it is still stiff. For withdrawing a limp penis is harmful to a man, and one should take great care not to do this.

IX

"Master Tung-hsüan said: A careful investigation has shown that there are but thirty main positions for consummating the sexual union. With the exception of minor details these various positions and diverse movements are fundamentally the same and can be said to encompass all possibilities. I describe these positions here and record their special names, I depict their features and establish their sequence. The understanding reader will be able to probe their wonderful meaning to its very depth.

1. *Close Union*. 2. *Firm Attachment*. 3. *Exposed Gills*. 4. *The Unicorn's Horn*.

Next to these four basic positions there are the following playful variations.

5. *Reeling-off Silk*. As she lies on her back, the woman should embrace the man's neck with her arms and wrap her legs around his torso. The man should touch his thighs to her rear and insert his Jade Stalk.

6. *Winding Dragon*. Lying on her back, the woman raises her bent legs. Kneeling between her thighs, the man should push her feet back with his left hand until they are above her breasts; at the same time, he should insert his Jade Stalk into the Jade Gate.

7. *Pair-eyed fish*.¹ The man and the woman lie side by side facing each other. The woman places one leg on his. Kissing each other, they suck each other's tongues. Then the man spreads his legs, lifts the woman's upper leg with his hand, and inserts his Jade Stalk.

¹ Prof. Herbert Franke points out in his review of ECP that the title of this posture refers to the mythical animal *pi-mu-yü*, consisting of a pair of fishes with a common tail but separate head and body. He refers to a picture of the animal in E. Chavannes, "Mission Archéologique dans la Chine septentrionale", vol. I, plate 97.

8. *Pair of Swallows*. Lying on her back, the woman spreads her legs. The man sits on top of her with his legs apart. He leans forward and embraces her shoulders with his arms. When the woman has tightly wrapped herself around his torso, he slides his Jade Stalk into the Cinnabar Gully.

9. *Kingfisher Union*. Lying on her back, the woman grabs her feet with her hands. The man kneels with his legs spread wide and embraces her torso. Then he inserts his Jade Stalk into the Lyre Strings.

10. *Mandarin Ducks*. Lying on her side, the woman bends both legs and places the left one on top of the man's left leg. Then the man, who lies behind her back, places his left leg on top of the woman's right calf. Raising the woman's left thigh with his left knee, he inserts his Jade Stalk.

11. *Fluttering Butterflies*. The man lies on his back with his legs spread. Facing him, the woman sits on his thighs. With her feet on the bed, the woman supports herself with her hands and moves quickly. Then the Positive Peak is inserted into the vagina.

12. *Reversed Flying Ducks*. The man lies on his back with his legs spread. The woman sits on his stomach and faces his feet. With her head bent down, she grasps the Jade Stalk and places it in her Cinnabar Gully.

13. *Low-branched Pinetree*. Lying on her back, the woman raises her legs and crosses them. The man holds her torso and the woman holds his. Then he inserts his Jade Stalk into the Jade Gate.

14. *Bamboos Near The Altar*. The man and woman stand facing each other. Embracing, they exchange kisses while the Positive Peak presses deep into the Cinnabar Gully in order to penetrate the Yang Terrace.

15. *Two dancing Female Phoenix Birds*. The man orders one woman to lie on her back and another to sit on her. The woman on the bottom raises her legs and the other sits with her feet apart so that their vulvas are next to each other. Facing them, the man kneels in such a way that he can enter the upper and lower Jade Gate alternately.¹

16. *Phoenix Holding Its Chicken*. This position is best when a fat and tall woman has sex with a short man.

17. *Flying Sea Gulls*. The man stands at the front of the bed and raises the woman's legs. Then he inserts his Jade Stalk deep into her Children's Palace.²

18. *Gamboling Wild Horses*. The woman lies on her back. The man raises her legs and puts her feet on his shoulders. Then he inserts his Jade Stalk deep into her Jade Gate.

19. *The Galloping Steed*. The woman lies on her back. Squatting, the man brings her head close to him with his left hand and raises her feet with his right hand. Then he inserts his Jade Stalk into her Children's Palace.

¹ The *Eisei-hiyōshō* gives a better text, and my ECP translation is amended accordingly.

² Van Gulik rendered several different Chinese terms as *Pretiosa porta*. Usually, but not always, this refers to the Jade Gate (*yü-men*). Here the Chinese phrase is *tzu-kung*. [PRG]

20. *Pawing Horse*. The woman lies on her back. The man places one of her feet on his shoulder and moves the other freely. This position enables the Jade Stalk deeply to penetrate the Cinnabar Gully, with the greatest pleasure.

21. *Jumping White Tiger*. The woman, supporting herself on her hands and knees, bends her head down. The man kneels behind her. Holding her torso with his hands, he thrusts into her Children's Palace.

22. *Dark Cicada Cleaving To A Tree*. Lying on her stomach, the woman spreads her legs. The man kneels between her thighs and raises her legs. Embracing her, he thrusts his Jade Stalk into the Jade Gate from behind.

23. *Goat Facing A Tree*. The man sits with his legs crossed. He orders the woman to sit in his lap facing away. She inclines her head to observe how the Jade Stalk is inserted. Then the man quickly grabs her torso and begins to move his hips.

24. *The Jungle Fowl*. The man sits on a bed with his legs crossed. He orders a girl to sit in his lap and face him. Then he inserts his Jade Stalk into the Jade Gate. Another woman stands beside her and helps her move by moving the corners of her cloak. This can bring the greatest pleasure.

25. *Phoenix Sporting in the Cinnabar Crevice*. Lying on her back, the woman keeps her legs in the air by holding her feet. The man kneels in front of her and inserts his Jade Stalk into the Cinnabar Gully. Leaning on the bed with his hands, he begins to move his hips. The position quickly induces an orgasm.

26. *The Rukh Bird Soaring Over The Sea*. While the woman lies on her back, the man places her legs on his arms. Placing his arms below her midriff, he inserts his Jade Stalk.

27. *Wailing Monkey Embracing A Tree*. The man sits with his legs crossed. He orders the woman to squat in his lap and embrace him. He places one hand beneath her rear and inserts his Jade Stalk with the other. Then the man begins to thrust while supporting himself on the bed with that hand.

28. *Cat And Mouse In One Hole*. The man lies on his back with his legs spread. The woman lies face-down on top of him and deeply inserts his Jade Stalk. Or the man lies on the woman's back and plays within the Jade Gate with his Jade Stalk.

29. *Donkeys in the Third Moon of Spring*. The woman crouches on the bed and leans on her hands and knees. The man stands at the front of the bed and embraces her torso. He inserts his Jade Stalk into her Jade Gate. Truly, this way quickly produces an orgasm.

30. *Hounds of the Ninth Day of Autumn*. The woman crouches on her hands and knees, looking away² from the man. The man bends the upper part of

¹ The *Eisei-hiyōshō* adds *chiu* "nine" in front of *kou* "dog", which is doubtless correct since it makes this title parallel with that of the preceding posture. Also the explanatory text is slightly different, but does not make better sense. Since the *I-hsin-fang* version which I translated literally in ECP does not make sense either, here I present a new translation which is partly surmise, based on the name of the posture which suggests copulating dogs.

² The text says *adversa*, which must be an error for *aversa*. [PRG]

his body over the woman's back, lowers his face, and inserts his Jade Stalk into her Jade Gate.

X

"Master Tung-hsüan said: There are the following nine styles of moving the Jade Stalk. *One*, flailing out to right and left in the way a brave general breaks up the enemy ranks. *Two*, moving up and down like a wild horse bucking through a stream. *Three*, pulling out and pushing in, like a flight of gulls playing in the waves. *Four*, alternating swiftly deep and shallow strokes, like a sparrow picking rice grains (left over) in the mortar. *Five*, deep and shallow strokes in steady succession, like large stones sinking into the sea. *Six*, pushing on slowly, like a snake entering its hole to hibernate. *Seven*, swift pushes like a frightened rat rushing into its hole. *Eight*, rising slowly as if dragging the feet, like a hawk clutching an elusive rabbit. *Nine*, first rising then plunging low, like a big sail braving the gale.

XI

"Master Tung-hsüan said: There are the following six ways of penetration. *One*, pushing the Jade Stalk down and letting it move to and fro over the Lute Strings like a saw, as if one were plying open an oyster to obtain the shining pearl inside. *Two*, hitting the Golden Gully over the Jade Veins, as if one were cleaving a stone to discover the Jade Kernel. *Three*, letting the Positive Peak hit against the Jewel Terrace, like an iron pestle descending into the medicine bowl. *Four*, letting the Jade Stalk go in and out, left and right, like welding iron with a hammer. *Five*, letting the Positive Peak mill around in the Sacred Field and the Deep Vale, like a farmer hoeing his field in autumn. *Six*, letting the Hsüan-pu and T'ien-t'ing Peaks¹ rub against each other, two mighty mountains crumbling together.

XII

"Master Tung-hsüan said: When the man feels that he is about to emit semen he should always wait until the woman has reached orgasm. When she has come to this point, the man should proceed with shallow thrusts and play in the space between the Lyre Strings and the Grain-Shaped Cave with his penis. His motions should be like an infant who suckles at his mother's nipple. Then the man closes his eyes and concentrates his thoughts, he presses "his tongue against the roof of his mouth, bends his back and stretches his neck. He opens his nostrils wide and squares his shoulders

¹ Two mythical peaks said to form part of the K'un-lun Mountains and supposed to be inhabited by Immortals.

closes his mouth and sucks in his breath. Then (he will not ejaculate and) the semen will ascend inwards on its own account. A man can completely regulate his ejaculations. When having intercourse with women he should only emit semen two or three times in ten.

XIII

"Master Tung-hsüan said: Every man who desires a child should wait until after the woman has had her menstruation. If he copulates with her on the first or third day thereafter, he will obtain a son. If on the fourth or fifth day, a girl will be conceived. All emissions of semen during copulation after the fifth day are merely spilling one's semen without serving a purpose.

"The man must wait with emitting semen till the woman experiences orgasm, so that they reach the paroxysm simultaneously. When the man is about to ejaculate, he should release an abundant amount of semen. Before this, however, he should lay the woman on her back and soothe the beatings of her heart. This should make her gather her thoughts. Closing her eyes, she should concentrate on receiving the man's semen.

"Lao-tzû¹ has said: 'A child conceived at midnight will live to an advanced age. A child conceived before midnight will reach a normal age. A child conceived after midnight shall not live long'.

XIV

"After a woman has conceived, she should engage in good works. She should not look upon bad scenes, she should not hear bad words; she should suppress all sexual desire, she should not vituperate or quarrel. She should avoid becoming frightened and not overtire herself. She should not engage in idle talk nor let herself become depressed. She should avoid eating raw, cold, sour or peppery foods. She should not ride in a cart or on a horse, she should not climb steep hills or go near a precipice. She should not go down steep descents nor walk fast. She should take no medicine nor subject herself to acupuncture or moxibustion. In all respects her thoughts should be correct and she should continually listen to the Classical Books being read aloud. Then her child will be clever and wise, loyal and good. This is called 'educating the unborn child'.

XV

"Master Tung-hsüan said: If the man is twice as old as the woman their copulating will harm the woman. If the woman is twice as old as the man their copulating will harm the man.

¹ Lao-tzû is the philosopher mentioned as author of the *Tao-tê-ching*.

"As regards the correct cosmic orientation of the body and the auspicious times for engaging in sexual intercourse, these are shown in the following table.

Spring: lie with the head pointing East. Summer: lie with the head pointing South. Autumn: lie with the head pointing West. Winter: lie with the head pointing North.

Positive, i.e. odd days of the month are auspicious. Negative, i.e. even days of the month are harmful to the sexual act.

Positive hours, i.e. the hours from one in the morning until noon are advantageous. Negative hours, i.e. the hours from noon till eleven p.m. are harmful to the sexual act.

The most propitious dates are: in spring the days belonging to the element "wood", in summer the days belonging to the element "fire", in autumn the days belonging to the element "metal", and in winter the days belonging to the element "water".¹

XVI

"The 'Bald Chicken Potion' will cure a man's five sufferings and seven aches and preserve him from impotency. Lü Ta-ching, Prefect of Shu, partook of this potion when he was seventy years old and then sired three sons. He drank it steadily and (had intercourse with his wife so often that) she came to suffer from a vaginal disease so that she could neither sit nor lie down. Then the Prefect threw the potion into the courtyard where a cock ate it. This cock jumped on a hen and continued copulating several days without interruption, picking the hen's head until it was completely bald. Therefore people called this potion 'Bald Chicken Drug' or 'Bald Chicken Pill'.

Recipe:

- Jou-tsung-jung (*Boschniakia glabra*) 3 grams
- Wu-wei-tzû (*Schizandra sinensis*) 3 grams
- T'u-szû-tzû (*Cuscuta japonica*) 3 grams
- Yüan-chih (*Polygala japonica*) 3 grams
- Shê-ch'uang-tzû (*Cridium japonicum*) 4 grams

Powderize and sieve. To be taken daily on empty stomach in one square spoonful wine. If taken three times daily one will be invincible. If taken for sixty days one will be able to copulate with forty women. The powder may also be mixed with wax and rolled into pills as small as *wu-t'ung* seeds. First one takes them regularly for five or nine days, thereafter as needed.

¹ This passage refers to the chronological correspondences of the Five Elements. *Chia-i* days belong to the element "wood", and so does spring. *Ping-ting* days and summer belong to the element "fire", *k'eng-hsin* days and autumn to "metal", and *jên-kuei* days and winter to "water".

The "Deer Horn Potion" will cure a man's five sufferings and seven aches, debility and incapacity, also failure of the member to rise when approaching the woman; and prevent shrinking of the member during the act. Furthermore involuntary emissions, excess of urine and aches in the back and middle will also be cured.

Recipe:

Lu-chüeh (deer horns)
 Po-tzû-jên (cedar seeds)
 T'u-szû-tzû (*Cuscuta japonica*)
 Ch'ê-ch'ien-tzê (*Plantago major var. asiatica*)
 Yüan-chih (*Polygala japonica*)
 Wu-wei-tzu (*Schizandra sinensis*)
 Jou-tsung-jung (*Boschniakia glabra*)
 Four grams of each.

Powderize and sieve. Take five grains in a square spoon after each meal. If this is not effective, add one spoon of an inch square.

Medicine for enlarging the penis.

Recipe:

Jou-tsung-jung (*Boschniakia glabra*) 3 grams
 Hai-tsao (sea grass) 2 grams

Powderize and sieve. Mix with liver extract from a white dog killed during the first moon and thrice apply to the penis as ointment. Then wash off with fresh water taken from the well in the early morning. Guaranteed to lengthen the penis three inches.

Medicine for shrinking a woman's vagina and curing frigidity during the sexual act.

Recipe:

Shih-liu-huang (Sulphur) 2 grams
 Ch'ing-mu-hsiang (Inula incense) 2 grams
 Shan-ts'ai-huang (seeds of *Evodia rutaecarpa Bth.*)
 Shê-ch'uang-tzû (*Cnidium japonicum*)

Powderize and sieve. A small quantity should be applied in the inside of the vagina prior to sexual intercourse. Care should be taken not to apply too much for then the vagina will close.

Also: Mix three pinches of sulphur powder in one pint of hot water. If one washes the vagina with this solution it will become as narrow as that of a girl of twelve or thirteen.

As a complement to the *Ars Amatoria* translated above I shall now survey the contents of Part 28 of the *I-hsin-fang*. Below the reader will find selected

passages from this text, arranged according to the thirty headings into which Part 28 is divided.

In the original all quotations are headed by the name of the book they are taken from. Most of them are from four handbooks of sex which I list herebelow, together with the abbreviations indicating these sources in my translation:

SNC : *Su-nü-ching*.
 YFPC : *Yü-fang-pi-chüeh*.
 YFCY : *Yü-fang-chih-yao*.
 HNC : *Hsüan-nü-ching*.

FANG NEI CHI

RECORDS OF THE BEDCHAMBER

Part 28 of the I-hsin-fang

CONTENTS:

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I. Supreme Significance of the Sexual Act

SNC—"The Yellow Emperor addressed the Plain Girl saying: 'My spirit is weak and in disharmony. My heart is sad and I am in continuous fear. What should I do about this?'

"The Plain Girl answered: 'All debility of man must be attributed to faulty exercise of the sexual act. Woman is superior to man in the same respect as water is superior to fire. Those who are expert in sexual intercourse are like good cooks who know how to blend the five flavours into a tasty broth. Those who know the art of Yin and Yang can blend the five pleasures; those who do not know the art will die an untimely death, without ever having really enjoyed the sexual act. Is this not something one should guard against?'

"Then the Plain Girl said: 'The Elected Girl had a wonderful knowledge of the arts of Tao, so the King sent her to P'êng-tsu, to inquire about methods to reach immortality. P'êng-tsu said: 'A man can gain longevity by sparing

his semen and nursing his spirit, also by dieting and taking various drugs. But if he does not know the methods of sexual intercourse, diet and drugs will be of no avail. The union of man and woman is like the mating of Heaven and Earth. It is because of their correct mating that Heaven and Earth last forever. Man, however, has lost this secret, therefore his age has gradually decreased. If a man could learn to stop this decline of his power and how to avoid ills by the art of Yin and Yang, he will attain immortality'.

"The Elected Girl bowed twice and asked: 'Could I hear the essence of this art?'"

"P'êng-tsu said: 'This art is very easy to know, but man cannot practise it. Now the King rules over all the complicated machinery of the Empire, therefore he must familiarize himself with all disciplines of Tao. Part of his duty lies in the harem, therefore he must know the methods of sexual intercourse. The principle of this method is to have frequent intercourse with young girls, but emit semen only on rare occasions. This method makes a man's body light and will expel all diseases'."

Thereafter follows a passage about the Han Emperor Wu, which Yeh Tê-hui did not include in his reconstruction, perhaps because he considered it a later interpolation. It must be noted that during the fifth and sixth centuries Taoist writers composed a number of treatises which they represented as dating from the Han period, in order to enhance the prestige of such books. Most of these spurious literary productions centre about the Han Emperor Wu (B.C. 140-87). As was mentioned already in Chapter IV above, this Emperor was deeply interested in Taoist alchemy and the quest for immortality and invited a number of self-styled immortals and wonderworkers to his court.

The best known of these spurious works is the *Han-wu-li-nei-chuan* "The Inner Biography of Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty", ascribed to the famous Han scholar Pan Ku (32-92 A.D.), but in reality written during the 5th or 6th century. This book relates, in a brilliant literary style typical of the Liu-ch'ao period, how Emperor Wu received a visit from the Taoist goddess Hsi-wang-mu, the Fairy Queen of the Western Paradise, who instructed the Emperor in the secrets of longevity; this visit is dated the first year of the Yüan-fêng era, or 110 B.C. Although the Art of the Bedchamber is not directly referred to in this book, the text often alludes to it, adding that these secret teachings are transmitted only once in four thousand years and always from one woman to another.

Through the centuries until the end of the Ming period (1644 A.D.), the handbooks of sex refer to the above-mentioned date as the one on which the secrets of sexual intercourse were again divulged to man in the person of

Emperor Wu. Beside Hsi-wang-mu they also mention one of the Emperor's Ministers as the instructor who enounces these arcana. The passage from SNC quoted in the *I-hsin-fang* resembles the version given in Chapter 5 of the *Shên-hsien-chuan* (ascribed to Ko Hung but dating from the T'ang period), under the heading Wu Yen. The SNC quotation says:

SNC—"During the Han Dynasty the Imperial Son-in-law Wu Tzû-tu (i.e. Wu Yen) had reached an age of hundred and thirty years. The Emperor Wu, while hunting on the banks of the Wei River, noticed that there was a brilliant halo of more than a fathom high about the head of Wu Tzû-tu. The Emperor marvelled at this and inquired of Tung-fang Shuo about it. The latter said: 'This man's vital essence is in communication with Heaven. He knows the art of sexual intercourse'. Thereupon the Emperor dismissed his suite and asked Wu Tzû-tu about it privately. Wu Tzû-tu said: 'The affair of Yin and Yang constitutes the secret of the bedchamber. I, Your Majesty's servant, ought not to speak about this. Those who can practise this art are few, I dare not divulge it. I was taught this art by Master Ling-yang when I was sixty-five years old and have been practising it for seventy-two years. All those who strive to prolong their life must seek life's very source. If one merely covets woman's beauty and forces oneself to emit semen, all one's bloodvessels will be harmed and the hundred diseases will raise their head'."

After this historical passage, the text quotes the YFCY in a passage that closely resembles Ko Hung's statement about the Yellow Emperor and his many wives, and translated on page 95 above.

YFCY—"P'êng-tsu said: 'The Yellow Emperor had intercourse with twelve hundred women and thereby became an Immortal. Ordinary men have but one woman and that one suffices to make them perish. Is not there a vast difference between those who know the secrets of sexual intercourse and those who are ignorant of it? Those who know this art worry only about not obtaining a sufficient number of women with whom to copulate. Those women need not necessarily all be beautiful and attractive. One should look for young ones who have not yet borne a child and who are well covered with flesh. If one copulates with seven or eight of such women the benefit will be great."

SNC—"The Yellow Emperor asked the Plain Girl: 'Now what if one decides to refrain entirely from sexual intercourse?' The Plain Girl answered: 'This is wrong. Heaven and Earth have their opening and closing, Yin and Yang develop from each other. Man is modelled after Yin and Yang and embodies the sequence of the four seasons. If one should resolve to abstain from sexual intercourse, one's spirit will not develop since the interchange of Yin and Yang will then come to a halt. How could one thus supplement one's vital essence? Blending the vital essence during frequent exercise of the sexual act,

substituting the new for the old, this is how one benefits oneself. If the Jade Stalk becomes inactive a man will die. But its activity should be controlled and guided. If one knows how to copulate without emitting semen, then the semen will "return". To make the semen "return" so as to benefit one's system—this is the secret of life'."

Hereafter follows the passage from Pao-p'u-tzû quoted on p. 95 above. Then section I and II of *Tung-hsüan-tzû*.

II. *Nursing male potency*

Under this heading are given quotations that stress the necessity of copulating with a number of different women in order to strengthen the man's vital essence. I translate only one.

YFPC—"The Taoist of the Green Buffalo said: 'If a man continually changes the women with whom he copulates the benefit will be great. If in one night one can copulate with more than ten women it is best. If one always copulates with one and the same woman her vital essence will gradually grow weaker and in the end she will be in no fit condition to give the man benefit. Moreover the woman herself will become emaciated'."

Maspero, *op. cit.*, p. 395, note 2, identifies the "Taoist of the Green Buffalo" *ch'ing-niu tao-shih* as the 3rd century Taoist Fêng Hêng.

III. *Nursing female potency*

This is a curious section that deals with Taoist sexual magic. It explains i.e. how a woman can change her sex by extracting Yang essence from the man during the coitus. This passage shall be separately translated and discussed at the end of this chapter.

IV. *Harmonizing the mood*

This section begins with chapters III, IV and V of *Tung-hsüan-tzû*. Then follow these quotations from the other handbooks:

SNC—"The Yellow Emperor said: 'Sometimes it happens that in the exercise of coitus, my Jade Stalk does not want to rise. When that happens, I turn red from the shame of this humiliation, and my brow becomes moist with sweat. However, as I burn with blazing desire, I shake my member with my hand, so that it might rise. Please instruct me as to what to do on such an occasion'. The Plain Girl said: 'What Your Majesty inquires about is a common suffering of all people. This is (because they forget) that every time a man wishes to copulate there is a certain order of things which must be followed. In the first place, the man must harmonize his mood with that of the woman and then the Jade Stalk will rise, etc.'" (there follows an explanation of preliminary sexual play, similar to ch. III of *Tung-hsüan-tzû*).

YFCY—"The Taoist Liu Ching said: 'When about to copulate with a woman a man must always first engage her in protracted gentle play to harmonize her mood with his and make her feelings respond. After a considerable time of this sporting the man can start the actual sexual union. He should insert his penis when it is not completely erect. He should withdraw it when it is firm and hard. The action of thrusting and withdrawing should be done slowly, with proper intervals of time. One should not move violently, for then one's five intestines will be upset and the blood circulation will be harmed, thereby making one susceptible to the hundred diseases. During the coitus one should not emit semen. If on one night a man can copulate scores of times without ejaculating once, then all his ills will be cured and his span of life will be prolonged daily'.

HNC—"The Yellow Emperor said: 'When a man is about to copulate with a woman she will sometimes not be happy, her passion will not be roused and her vulva will not become moist. The man's Jade Stalk will not rise and will remain short and limp. What is the cause of this?' The Dark Girl answered: 'Yin and Yang undergo each other's influence. Therefore, when Yang does not obtain Yin it is sad and if Yin does not obtain Yang it will not become active. If the man wants to copulate and the woman does not gladly assent, or if the woman wants to copulate and the man does not desire her, then it means that their hearts are not yet in harmony and that their vital essence is not yet roused'."

V. *Preliminary play*

The greater part of this section consists of ch. VI, VII and VIII of *Tung-hsüan-tzu*. Then follows a passage quoted from SNC, which is not translated here.

VI. *Five properties of the male member*

A brief eulogy on the properties of the male member, quoted from YFPC. Not translated.

VII. *The woman's five signs*

As appears from the opening paragraph, this section forms one unit together with VIII and IX; these three sections describe the signs showing a woman's experience during the sexual act. Translated in full here below.

YFPC—"The Yellow Emperor said: 'How can one know that the woman is near orgasm?' The Plain Girl said: 'Woman has the five signs and the five desires, and moreover the ten ways of moving her body during the act. The five signs are as follows.

"*First*, she grows red in the face; now the man can slowly press near. *Second*, her nipples become hard, her nose moist. Then the man may slowly insert his penis. *Third*, her throat becomes dry and she sucks back her saliva. Then

the man may begin to thrust slowly. *Fourth*, her vagina becomes moist. Then he may sink his penis deeper. *Fifth*, her vaginal emissions drop between her buttocks. Then the man may move freely.

VIII. *The woman's five desires*

"The Plain Girl said: 'By the five desires one can judge the woman's response. *First*, if her thoughts desire the union her breathing will become irregular. *Second*, if her vagina desires the union her nostrils will distend and her mouth open. *Third*, if her vital essence wants to be stirred she will move her body up and down. *Fourth*, If she wants to fulfill her desire, the liquid emitted from her vagina will soak her clothes. *Fifth*, if she is about to reach orgasm she will stretch her body and close her eyes.

IX. *The woman's ten ways of moving*

"The Plain Girl said: 'The ten signs of the movements of the woman's body are as follows. *First*, when she embraces the man with both of her arms, she shows that she wants him to draw her near and bring his penis to her vulva. *Second*, when she stretches her legs, she shows that she wants him to rub the upper part of her vulva (the clitoris). *Third*, when she extends her stomach, she shows that she wants shallow thrusts. *Fourth*, when she begins to wiggle her buttocks, she shows that she has reached the beginning of her orgasm. *Fifth*, when she raises her legs, she shows that she wants deep thrusts. *Sixth*, when she grabs her thighs, she shows that her vagina is emitting fluids. *Seventh*, when she moves to the left and to the right, she shows that she wants the penis to enter her sideways. *Eighth*, when she raises the upper part of her body and touches her chest to the man's, she shows that she has nearly reached orgasm. *Ninth*, when she relaxes her limbs, she shows that she has come to orgasm. *Tenth*, when the vagina flows plentifully, it shows that its vital essence has come forth. By these signs one will know that the woman has reached orgasm."

X. *Four conditions of the male member*

HNC—"The Yellow Emperor said: 'When I want to have intercourse and my penis does not become erect, should I arouse it or not?' The Dark Girl said: 'Certainly not. If a man feels the urge to copulate, he should pay due attention to the four different conditions of his member. Only if a man's member has passed through these four conditions can he bring about the woman's nine spirits'. The Yellow Emperor asked: 'What are these four conditions?' The Dark Girl said: 'If no motion is perceived within the Jade Stalk, the spirit of harmony has not yet been aroused. If it is moved with no visible swelling, the spirit of the skin has not yet been aroused. If it swells with no visible hardness, the spirit of the bones has not yet been aroused. If it becomes hard with no

perceptible warmth, the soul is not yet aroused. Movement within the penis shows that the semen has begun to move. Swelling of the penis shows that the semen is collecting in one place. Hardness indicates that the semen has reached the Inner Door. Warmth indicates that the semen is approaching the Outer Door. If these four spirits are controlled in the correct way, the outlet of the seminal duct will not open before its time and one will not spill the semen'."

XI. *The woman's nine spirits*

HNC—"The Yellow Emperor said: 'Good! Now how shall we recognize the nine spirits of the woman?' The Dark girl said: 'The nine spirits will be known by the following symptoms. If the woman breathes deeply and swallows her saliva, her lung spirit is roused. If she starts whispering endearments and kisses the man her heart spirit is roused. If she clasps him in her arms her spleen spirit is roused. If her vulva becomes wet and lubricated, the spirit of the kidneys is aroused. If she sucks the man's tongue, the spirit of the bones is aroused. If she begins to touch the man's penis with her hands, the spirit of the blood is aroused. If she caresses the man's nipples, the spirit of the flesh is aroused.

(The commentary observes that one 'spirit' is lacking. Transl.)

XII. *The nine positions*

HNC—"The Dark Girl said:

"The first of the nine positions is called the Turning Dragon. The woman is turned onto her back; the man lies above her, positioning his knees on the bed. The woman opens the Jade Gate and the man inserts the Jade Stalk into the Grain-Shaped Cave. At the same time, he aims for the spot above it. Next, he begins to move slowly, and he alternates eight shallow thrusts with two deep ones. He should insert his penis while it is not completely hard, and should withdraw it while it is still stiff. If he makes these motions with robust vigor, the woman will go mad with joy because of the enormous pleasure that she feels.

"The second position is called The Tiger's Tread. The woman is made to lean forward on her hands and knees with her buttocks raised and her head lowered. The man kneels behind her and holds onto her torso. Then he thrusts his Jade Stalk into her centre. It is very important for him to penetrate deeply and to move quickly without interruption. He should alternate five shallow thrusts with eight that penetrate deeply. The proper rhythm should develop by itself. The woman's vagina contracts and widens with the alternate motions, and releases such an abundance of fluid that it drips out. After the act one should rest. This method will prevent the hundred ills and the man will become increasingly vigorous.

"The third position is called the Monkey's Attack. The woman is made to lie on her back. The man raises her legs until her knees touch her breasts and her buttocks and the lower part of her back hang in the air. Then, when the Jade Stalk is inserted, the man penetrates the Mouse of Scents. When the

woman begins to move, the vaginal emissions will be like a very heavy storm. The man should try nothing beyond holding the woman down as if he were mad. One should stop as soon as the woman has experienced orgasm. If one practises this method the hundred ills will be cured of their own account.

"The fourth position is called The Cleaving Cicada. The woman is made to lie on her stomach. The man lies down on her back. In order to be able to insert his Jade Stalk deeply, he lifts her buttocks so that he may penetrate her Red Pearl. If he now alternates six shallow thrusts with nine that penetrate deeply, the woman's vagina will grow moist with a very rich flow of liquid. The inner parts of the vagina will move and contract, while the vulva stretches itself. One should stop as soon as the woman has experienced orgasm. This method will heal the seven kinds of aches.

"The fifth position is called The Mounting Turtle. The woman lies on her back and raises her legs. The man pulls her legs up until her feet are near his breast. Then he inserts his Jade Stalk deeply until he penetrates into the Baby Girl. He should alternate deep and shallow thrusts in the proper order, so that each one is aimed at her centre. This will bring the woman great pleasure, and she will respond to the man by moving her body. Her vagina will become wet with plentiful liquid. Then the man should penetrate as deeply as he can, stopping only when the woman has reached orgasm. Through this method one's semen will be saved and one's force will increase a hundredfold.

"The sixth position is called The Fluttering Phoenix Bird. The woman is made to lie on her back and raise her legs. The man sits on her thighs and looks at her feet; he supports himself on the bed with his hands. He inserts his Jade Stalk and penetrates her Elder Brother Stone. He moves his penis vigorously, compelling the woman to respond to his motion. He should alternate eight deep thrusts with nine shallow ones. His buttocks should be firmly pressed against the woman's belly. Then the woman's vulva will stretch and become wet by itself. One stops as soon as the woman has experienced orgasm. This method will cure the hundred ills.

"The seventh position is called The Rabbit Sucking Its Hair. The man lies on his back with his legs extended. The woman sits on him with her legs apart. Her knees should touch the bed next to his legs. She has her back turned to his face and looks at his feet. Then the Jade Stalk is inserted into the Lyre Strings. When the woman reaches orgasm, liquid will flow from the vagina like a fountain of water, and great joy and delightful pleasure will appear on her face. One stops as soon as the woman has reached orgasm. Thus the hundred ills will not arise.

"The eighth position is called Overlapping Fish Scales. The man lies on his back. The woman sits on him with her legs apart and both legs stretched out in front of her. Then the penis is slowly inserted. When it has only just entered her vagina, the penis should stop and should not be inserted further. Rather, the penis should continue to play like an infant suckling at its mother's

breast. Only the woman should move herself. This way of junction should be prolonged. When the woman has finally reached orgasm, the man should withdraw. This method will cure all kinds of congestion.

"The ninth position is called Cranes With Joined Necks. The man sits with his legs crossed. The woman sits on his legs with her legs apart and holds his neck with her arms. Then the Jade Stalk is inserted and penetrates the Grain-Shaped Cave. It is important to insert the penis as deeply as possible. The man will aid the woman's movement by placing his hands underneath her buttocks. The woman will reach orgasm naturally. Her vagina will be moistened with abundant liquid. One stops as soon as the woman has reached orgasm. Through this method the seven aches will be cured of their own account."

XIII. *The thirty positions*

Consists entirely of ch. IX of *Tung-hsüan-tzû*.

XIV. *Nine ways of moving the male member*

Consists entirely of ch. X of *Tung-hsüan-tzû*.

XV. *Six nuances of the male movement*

Section XI of *Tung-hsüan-tzû*.

XVI. *The eight benefits of sexual intercourse*

YFPC—"The Plain Girl said: 'Sexual intercourse has seven ills and eight benefits. The eight benefits are the following.

1. Concentration of semen. The woman is made to lie on her side and spread her legs. The man lies on his side between her legs. He will stop after eighteen thrusts.

2. Resting the spirit. The woman is made to lie on her back with a pillow underneath her buttocks and her legs extended. The man kneels between her legs and inserts his penis. He will stop after twenty-seven thrusts. This method will rest the man's spirit and also cure chills in the woman's vagina. To be applied thrice daily for a period of twenty days.

3. Benefiting the internal organs. The woman is made to lie on her side and raise her legs. The man lies across her perpendicularly and inserts his penis. Once the penis enters, the man thrusts thirty-six times and stops. Same effect as sub 2., if applied four times daily, twenty days in succession.

4. Strengthening the bones. Lying on her back, the woman is made to bend her left knee while her right leg is extended. The man lies on top of her. Once the penis enters, he makes exactly forty-five thrusts.

5. Harmonizing the blood circulation. The woman is made to lie on her side.

She bends her right knee and extends her left leg. The man inserts his penis while supporting himself on the bed with his hands. He will stop after fifty-four thrusts. This method will promote the man's blood circulation and cure the woman's vaginal pains. To be applied six times daily during twenty days.

6. Increasing the blood. The man lies on his back and the woman sits on top of him. She raises her buttocks and, once the penis is inserted, moves up and down until she has received sixty-three thrusts. This method will increase a man's strength and cure irregular menstruation of the woman. To be applied seven times daily for ten days in succession.

7. Benefiting the humours. The woman is made to lie prone on her face with her buttocks raised. The man lies on her, inserts his penis from behind, and stops after seventy-two thrusts. This method will increase the marrow.

8. Adjusting the physical system. The woman is made to lie on her back with her legs folded beneath her in such a way that her buttocks rest on her feet. The man mounts her with his legs apart, inserts his penis, and stops after eighty-one thrusts. This method will strengthen the man's bones and cure evil odour of the woman's vagina. To be applied nine times daily for a period of nine days."

This passage provides a good example of Taoist number magic. Yang is represented by odd numbers, hence a child conceived on the 1st, 3rd or 5th day after the menstruation will be a son, daughters are conceived on the 2nd or 4th day. The number 9 especially expresses Yang because it is the highest uneven unit under 10. The number 81 or 9 times is often called "Complete Yang".

It should be noted that in the Chinese text of the passage translated the number of the strokes is expressed in a multiple of nine: 2 times 9, 3 times 9, etc., till 9 times 9 or "Complete Yang" is reached. Moreover, the number of strokes is correlated with the times a method should be applied daily: *twice* daily $18 = 2 \times 9$ strokes, *thrice* daily $27 = 3 \times 9$ strokes, etc.

XVII. *The seven ills of sexual intercourse*

This section is largely of the same purport as the preceding one. As a specimen I translate the sixth paragraph.

YFPC—"The sixth ill is obstruction of the organs. This ailment is caused by a man's over-indulgence in sexual intercourse and failure to regulate his copulation. If he repeatedly misses the right rhythm during the coitus, he will drain his vital essence. He has to force emissions and in the end his semen will be exhausted and will not come forth any more. As a result the hundred diseases will arise. The man will be tired and his vision will become indistinct. This can be cured by the following method. The man, lying on his back, makes the woman sit on him with her face towards his feet, while he supports himself with his hands. Once his penis has been inserted, the woman moves up

and down until she climaxes. The man should not ejaculate. When this method is applied nine times daily, the man will be cured in ten days."

XVIII. *Making the semen return*

YFPC—"The Elected Girl asked: 'The pleasure of the sexual act lies in the emission of semen. Now if the man restrains himself and does not ejaculate how can he then enjoy this?' P'êng-tsu answered: 'Indeed after the emission the man's body is tired, his ears are buzzing, his eyes are heavy with sleep, his throat is parched and his limbs inert. Although he has experienced a brief moment of joy, it is not really a pleasurable feeling. If, on the other hand, the man exercises the sexual act without ejaculating, his vital essence will be strengthened, his body will be at ease and his hearing and vision will be acute. Although the man has repressed his passion, his love for the woman will increase. It is as if he could never get enough of her. How could this be called unpleasurable?'"

"Again: The Yellow Emperor said: 'I wish to hear the advantage of engaging in the sexual act without ejaculating'. The Plain Girl said: 'If a man engages once in the act without emitting semen, then his vital essence will be strong. If he does this twice, his hearing and vision will be acute. If thrice, all diseases will disappear. If four times, his soul will be at peace. If five times, his blood circulation will be improved. If six times, his loins will become strong. If seven times, his buttocks and thighs will increase in power. If eight times, his body will become glossy. If nine times, he will reach longevity. If ten times, he will be like an Immortal'."

YFCY—"Those who can exercise the sexual act scores of times in one day without once emitting semen will thereby cure all their ills and live to a great age. If the act is performed with a number of different women, its benefit will increase. It is best to engage in the sexual act with ten or more different women on one night".

"Also: The Classic of the Immortals says: 'The way to make the semen return to enforce the brain is thus. When, during the sexual act the man feels that he is about to ejaculate, he must quickly and firmly press with fore and middle finger of the left hand the spot between scrotum and anus, simultaneously inhaling deeply and gnashing his teeth scores of times, without holding his breath. Then the semen will be activated but yet not be emitted; it returns from the Jade Stalk and enters the brain. This method was taught by the Immortal Lü, but he made his disciples swear a solemn oath sealed in blood that they would not arbitrarily transmit this secret, lest (unqualified) people came to bodily harm'."

This section closes with the simile of the oil lamp, quoted from the *Ch'ien-chin-fang*. See the translation in Chapter VII, p. 195 below.

XIX. *Emission of semen*

YFPC—"The Yellow Emperor addressed the Plain Girl saying 'The correct way is not to ejaculate and to save one's semen. Now how should one shed semen in order to obtain a child?' The Plain Girl said: 'This is different for strong and weak and for young and old men. Every man must regulate his emissions according to the condition of his vital essence. He must never force himself to emit semen. Everytime he forces himself to reach orgasm he will harm his system. Therefore, strongly-built men of 15 years can afford to emit semen twice a day; thin ones once a day and the same applies to men of twenty years. Strongly built men of thirty may ejaculate once a day, weaker men once in two days. Strong men of forty may emit semen once in three days, weaker men once in four days. Strong men of fifty can ejaculate once in five days, weaker men once in ten days. Strong men of sixty may ejaculate once in ten days, weaker men once in twenty days. Strong men of seventy may emit semen once a month, weak ones should not ejaculate anymore at that age'.

Yang-shêng-yao-chi—"The Taoist Liu Ching said: 'In spring man can allow himself to emit semen once every three days, in summer and autumn twice a month. During winter one should save one's semen and not ejaculate at all. Indeed the way of Heaven is to store up Yang essence during winter. If a man can follow this example, he will attain longevity. (The loss of Yang energy caused by) one emission in winter is a hundred times greater than (that caused by) one emission in spring'."

This section further quotes a passage from the *Ch'ien-chün-fang* translated in ch. VII below, and ch. XII of *Tung-hsüan-tzû*.

XX. *How to cure ills by sexual intercourse*

YFPC—"Master Ch'ung-ho said: 'Indeed sexual extravagance and debauch will result in diseases that harm one's system, a fact that will become evident during the sexual act itself. But the diseases caused by the sexual act can also be cured thereby. An apt comparison is the curing of the after-effects of intoxication by the drinking of wine'."

Here there follow several paragraphs about how diseases caused by exercising the sexual act when the body is in unfit condition can be cured by copulating in a special way. The text is so corrupt that translation would be largely guess work. I translate one paragraph as a specimen.

"Wu-tzû-tu said: 'In order to improve the vision the following method should be used. At the moment that the man is about to emit semen, he should lift his head and withhold his breath. Glaring angrily and rolling his eyes from left to right he should contract his belly and make the semen return and enter all his veins'."

Towards the end of the section the text is in slightly better condition. I translate part of the penultimate paragraph.

YFPC—"In sexual intercourse the semen must be considered as the most precious substance. By saving it a man will protect his very life. After each ejaculation the loss of semen should be compensated by absorbing the woman's essence. (Saving the semen is effected by) pausing nine times after every series of nine strokes, or also by preventing the emission of semen by pressing the spot underneath the member with the (fingers of the) left hand. Then the semen will return and benefit the system. Absorbing the woman's essence is effected by alternating nine shallow thrusts with one deep one. Placing one's mouth over that of the 'enemy', one inhales her breath and sucks her saliva. When swallowed it will descend into the stomach and there change from Yin essence into Yang. When this has been done three times, one should again deliver shallow thrusts, alternating every nine of them with one deep push, until the number 81 or 9 times 9 has been reached, which completes the Yang number'.

XXI. *How to obtain children*

This section opens with two quotations from the *Ch'ien-chün-fang*. Then follow sections 15, 16 and 17 from the same book, which are discussed below, in Chapter VII. I translate a quotation from the *Ch'an-ching* "Classic of Obstetrics".

"The Yellow Emperor said: 'A human being is endowed with life when Yin and Yang are united in the woman's womb (viz. when she conceives the man's semen). At this moment one should take care to avoid the nine calamities. These are the following.

1. A child conceived during daytime will be given to vomiting.
2. A child conceived at midnight, when the interaction of Heaven and Earth is at a standstill, will either be mute, deaf or blind.
3. A child conceived during a solar eclipse will be either burned or wounded.
4. A child conceived during thunder and lightning, a time when Heaven in its anger displays its might, will easily develop mental troubles.
5. A child conceived during a lunar eclipse will be persecuted by an ill fate and so will its mother.
6. A child conceived when there is a rainbow in the sky will be exposed to ill fortune.
7. A child conceived during the summer or winter solstitium will bring harm to its parents.
8. A child conceived on nights of the waxing or waning moon will be killed in war or blinded by the wind.
9. A child conceived during intoxication or after a heavy meal will suffer from epilepsy, boils and ulcers."

The next two paragraphs further elaborate this idea of how atmospheric conditions and the physical state of the parents influence the future development



Figure 5

Mother with her two small sons

From the Wu-yu-ju-hua-pao, a collection of paintings by the 19th-century artist Wu Yu
 Dress and furniture are of the Ming period

of the unborn child. Thereafter follow quotations on how one should copulate in order to effect conception.

YFPC—"The Plain Girl said: 'There is a fixed method for obtaining children. One should purify one's heart and banish all sorrows, sit quietly in tranquil spirit, and concentrate one's thought by fasting. Then, on the third day after the woman's menstruation has stopped—after midnight and before cock's crow—the man must excite the woman's passion by protracted preliminary sexual play. Then he unites himself with her, adjusting his feelings to hers and taking care to assimilate his enjoyment to that of his partner. When the man ejaculates, the penis will have entered the vagina at a depth of half a thumb. If it should penetrate further, the penis would go beyond the mouth of the uterus. It should not penetrate beyond the Grain-Shaped Cave, for if it does, it will go beyond the Children's Gate and will not enter the Children's Door. If this method is practised in the correct way one will obtain wise and good children who will live to an advanced age'.

"P'êng-tsu said: 'In order to obtain children a man must store up and nurture his semen and not ejaculate too frequently. If then he emits semen when copulating with the woman on the third or fifth day after her menstruation has stopped, conception will result. If a boy is conceived he will be wise and talented, live long and reach an eminent position in life; if a girl is conceived she will be pure and wise and marry a prominent person'."

This section ends with ch. XIII and XIV of *Tung-hsüan-tzû*.

XXII. *Women suited for the coitus*

This section opens with a brief quotation from YFPC. Then this text is again quoted as follows.

YFPC—"A man should select for his sexual partners young women whose breasts have not yet developed and who are well covered with flesh. They should have hair fine as silk and small eyes in which the pupil and the white are clearly separated. Face and body should be smooth and speech harmonious. All her joints should be well covered with flesh and her bones should not be large. She should either have no pubic and axillary hair at all or such hair should be fine and smooth".

Then the text quotes the ancient handbook of physiognomy *T'ai-ch'ing-ching* as follows.

"The Yellow Emperor asked: 'What are the outer signs by which one can recognize a woman suitable for the exercise of sexual intercourse?' The Plain Girl said: 'Suitable women are naturally tender and docile and of gentle mien. Their hairs are of a silky black, their skin is soft and their bones fine. They are neither too tall nor too short, neither too fat nor too thin. The lips of the

vulva should be thick and large. Their groins should not be covered with hair and the vagina should be moist. Their age should be between twenty-five and thirty and they should not yet have borne a child. During coition, their vaginas should emit abundant liquid. Their bodies should move so that they cannot restrain themselves. Drenched in sweat, they succumb to the motions of the man. Women endowed with these qualities will never harm a man, even if he himself is ignorant of the correct way of sexual intercourse”.

XXIII. *Women unsuited for the coitus*

YFPC—“The outer signs for the recognition of a woman unsuited for sexual intercourse are as follows. Disheveled hair and coarse face, elongated neck and a protruding adam’s apple, irregular teeth and manly voice, a large mouth and long nose, eyes which are bloodshot or yellowish, long hairs on upper lip or cheeks resembling whiskers, large and protruding bones, yellowish hair and little flesh and long and stiff pubic hairs. Such women are harmful to the man. Sexual intercourse with these will rob a man of his health and vigour.

“A man should not copulate with women possessing a rough skin, with women who are very thin, with women who have inclinations for low-class men (*ch’ang ts’ung-kao-chiu-hsia*; translation uncertain), with women who have a manly voice, with women over forty, with women whose heart and belly are not in good order, with women whose hairs are growing in the wrong direction, with women whose body is always cold, with women who have strong and hard bones, women with curly hair and protruding adam’s apple, with women whose armpits have a bad odour, or women who have excessive vaginal secretions.

Tai-ch’ung-ching “The method of judging the qualities of a woman is to scrutinize her pubic and axillary hair with great care. These hairs should be soft and glossy. If these hairs are growing in the wrong direction or if she has rough hair on her arms and legs, she will harm a man. One union with such a woman will be a hundred times more harmful than one (with another woman otherwise unsuited for the coitus).

Thereafter follows a quotation from the same handbook of physiognomy discussing hermaphrodites.

Women endowed with a very long clitoris which grows or shrinks with the cycle of the moon, and other hermaphrodites, are particularly dangerous to a man. Women with reddish hair and a coarse face and those who are thin and sickly, can give a man no benefit.”

XXIV. *What should be avoided*

YFPC—“Master Ch’ung-ho said: ‘It is stated in the Book of Changes (*I-ching*) that Heaven manifests signs to show what is auspicious and what

nefarious in order to let the Sages model themselves thereafter. The Book of Rites states that a child conceived when there is thunder will not grow up but meet with disaster. Thus the Ancients used to warn against these things and their warnings should not be taken lightly. Therefore, if there are unusual signs in the sky above or disasters on earth below, then how could man, being placed between these two, not be filled with awe and reverence? This awe and reverence should be displayed especially when choosing the days for sexual intercourse. When doing so, the greatest care should be taken not to offend the cosmic forces".

"P'eng-tsu said: 'Man should be careful to adapt his sex life to the flux and influx of Yin and Yang in the cosmos. He should not engage in the sexual act when it is either very cold or very hot, when there is a strong wind or heavy rain, when there is a lunar or solar eclipse, during an earthquake or when there is thunder and lightning; for all these indicate taboos of Heaven.

"He should not engage in the sexual act when intoxicated or after a heavy meal, neither when very elated or angry, while feeling depressed or while being in great fear; for these conditions are taboos of man.

"He should not engage in the sexual act near places sacred to the worship of the spirits of Heaven and Earth or other sanctuaries, nor near a well or near the kitchen fire; for these are the taboos of Earth.

"These three kinds of taboos must be observed. If a man offends against them he will be subject to disease and his children will be short-lived.

"P'eng-tsu said: 'When persons die young because of excessive lewdness, incubi need not necessarily be the cause. Some women are fond of masturbating by inserting a small pouch filled with grain or an ivory rod into their vaginas. All such instruments for artificial satisfaction are robbers of life. They will cause a woman to grow old quickly and die before her time'.

There follow several quotations on other taboos, including intercourse with a woman during the menstruation period, after a severe illness, when feeling the urge to urinate, etc. The text quotes the first line of ch. XV of *Tung-hsüan-tzû*. I translate the curious note that follows thereafter.

"The Plain Girl said: 'The 16th day of the fifth moon is the day when Heaven and Earth mate. On this day one should refrain from sexual intercourse. Those who offend against this taboo will die within three years. In order to obtain proof one has but to suspend a piece of white cloth of one foot long on the evening of that day on the eastern wall (of one's house). If one inspects it the next morning one will find it covered with blood. Thus this day is taboo'".

After quoting the rest of ch. XV of *Tung-hsüan-tzû*, the section closes with the following quotation from the *Ch'ien-chin-fang* which will be of

interest to anthropologists since similar beliefs exist in many other countries.

"If a person engages in sexual intercourse after he has just recovered from a fever, or within a hundred days after having recovered from a serious disease, that is to say when his vital essence is not yet back to normal strength, he will almost certainly die. Fever is called in sexual terminology 'disease caused by a change of Yin and Yang'; it is difficult to cure and mostly results in death. Recently there was a nobleman who suffered from a slight attack of fever. Within ten days after his recovery he could ride on horseback and run about, so that he thought that he had completely recovered. He engaged in sexual intercourse, and suddenly felt a sharp pain in his abdomen, his hands and feet shook in convulsions and he died.

"The method for curing these diseases is to take that part of a woman's trousers that is in constant contact with her pubic hair, and burn this. The patient should take one spoonful of these ashes thrice daily. A woman can be cured by using that part of a man's trousers in the same way."

XXV. *Curing Incubi*

YFPC—"The Elected Girl asked: 'How do incubi originate?' P'êng-tsu answered: 'If a person has an unbalanced sex life, his sexual desire will increase. Devils and goblins take advantage of this condition. They assume human shape and have sexual intercourse with such a person. They are much more skilled in this art than human beings, so much so that their victim becomes completely enamoured of the ghostly lover. Those persons will keep the relation secret and will not speak about its delights. In the end they succumb alone, without anyone being the wiser.

"The after-effects of copulation with an incubus can be cured by the following method. The man should copulate all day and night without ejaculating; then after seven days the disease will be cured. When his body is so fatigued that he cannot continue the act, the man should let his penis rest in the woman's vagina, and he will benefit all the same. If this disease is not treated as indicated here, the victim will die in a few years.

"If one wishes a proof of the existence of incubi, one has but to repair alone to a marshy place far away in the mountains, in spring or autumn. One should stay there in a condition of complete tranquillity, staring into space and concentrating one's thoughts on sexual intercourse. After three days and three nights, the body will suddenly become alternately cold and hot, the heart will be troubled and the vision blurred. Then, a man engaging in this experiment will meet a woman, and a woman a man. During sexual intercourse with such an incubus one will experience a pleasure that is greater than ever felt while copulating with an ordinary human being. But at the

same time one will become subject to this disease which is difficult to cure'.

XXVI. *The use of drugs*

This section gives numerous recipes for various drugs and potions which cure debility, impotency and other ailments and afflictions connected with sexual intercourse. Since these prescriptions and the ingredients indicated are very similar to those given at the end of *Tung-hsüan-tzû*, only one passage which is of special interest is translated here.

This is a curious quotation from an old medical treatise called *Yin-yen-fang*. This work quotes *verbatim* a judicial document, viz. the confession of a noble lady who killed a male slave. It was inserted in this medical treatise because it mentions a recipe for rejuvenating a man and increasing his potency. It is difficult to assess the exact purport of this document; perhaps the lady in question quoted the recipe to excite the curiosity of the authorities and thus obtain special consideration for her case.

"The I-to Potion. 'I, Your Majesty's handmaid, bowing down twice, present this document to Your Imperial Majesty. Knocking my head upon the floor several times in succession, I pronounce myself guilty and deserving of the death penalty. Since I, ignorant though I am, know that the supreme duty is always to keep the Sovereign informed, I submit the following.

"When my husband Hua-fou reached the age of eighty years his potency declined. Then a friend gave him the following prescription.

Recipe:

Shêng-ti-huang (stems of fresh *Rehmannia lutea*), to be washed, cut in thin slices and soaked in dregs of wine. Pulverize thoroughly. Ten grams.

Kuei-hsin (*cinnamon*), one foot-length, two grams.

Kan-ts'ao (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*), 5 grams.

Shu (*Atractylis ovata*), 2 grams.

Kan-ch'i (dry lacquer?), 5 grams.

"These five ingredients must be powderized and sieved, to be taken after meals three times daily in a square-inch spoonful of wine.

"When he became ill my late husband prepared this potion, but he died before he could take it. Now my late husband had a slave named I-to. He was seventy-five years old and suffered from a bent waist; his hair was white and he walked stooping and with difficulty. I pitied him and gave him this potion. After this slave I-to had partaken of it for twenty days his waist straightened, his hair turned black again, his face became smooth and shining, so that he looked like a man of thirty. I had two maid servants, called Fan-hsi and Chin-shan. I gave them in marriage to I-to and he begot by them two sons

and two daughters. Once I-to went out to drink wine and returned home drunk. He wanted Chin-shan who was sleeping by my side. I-to seized her and forced her to sleep with him. I woke up and ordered the man I-to to sleep with me (mistaking him for Chin-shan.) I found that his force was remarkable and that he far excelled other men in this art. Thus, although I was already fifty years old, my sexual desire was rekindled. Being a lazy and ignorant woman, I thereafter could not deny myself sexual satisfaction. Thus I bore I-to two children. All the time I and my two maids gave ourselves over to sexual orgies with I-to. One day, however, I felt ashamed of having this relation with a slave and I killed I-to. When his bones were broken I saw that they were full of yellow marrow. Thus I knew the proof of the efficiency of this potion. If Your Majesty would deign to use this potion, the marrow will immediately increase. Hence this is deemed an excellent potion for the Sovereign. I, Your Majesty's handmaid, deserve death. Knocking my head on the floor several times I respectfully submit the foregoing".

This section closes with a few recipes for decreasing a man's potency, guaranteed to transform a normal man into a eunuch. In these prescriptions deer fat figures prominently; it is stated that this fat has such a strong influence on man's potency that one should even avoid coming near it.

XXVII. *Medicines for enlarging a small male member*

This section contains the recipe given in ch. XVI of *Tung-hsüan-tzû*, together with a few quoted from other sources.

XXVIII. *Medicines for shrinking a large vagina*

Same remark as under preceding item.

XXIX. *Post-defloration medicines*

Three prescriptions for curing continued bleeding as after-effect of a virgin's first copulation, and two for stilling the pain during and after defloration.

XXX. *Various diseases of married women*

Several medicines for relieving women whose vagina hurts or becomes inflamed during sexual intercourse. Also prescriptions for headaches and vaginal bleedings caused by the act.

The foregoing texts present together a cross-section of the more important ancient Chinese handbooks of sex and related literature which existed during the first seven centuries of our era. A few of the documents quoted may have been edited during the 8th century—since Tamba Yasuyori recorded them in

Japan in 982 this is the terminus ante quem—but this can hardly have affected materially their content. The medical treatise *Ch'ien-chin-fang* quoted under Section XXIV belongs properly to the T'ang period and will be further discussed in the next chapter.

These texts bear out the statement which I made at the end of Chapter III, to the effect that the handbooks of sex are primarily manuals of normal conjugal sexual relations. When I say "normal", I mean of course normal for the ancient Chinese social structure. The conjugal sexual relations referred to in these texts must be considered against the background of the polygamic family system, in which a middle-class householder had three or four, upper middle class persons six to twelve, and members of the nobility, great generals and princes thirty or more wives and concubines. For instance, the repeated advice of the handbooks that a man should copulate with a number of different women on the same night—in a monogamic society an exhortation to gross license—in ancient China falls entirely within the scope of marital sex relations. The necessity for the constant changing of sex partners which the handbooks so strongly recommend, is not based on the health factor alone. In the polygamous family balanced sexual relations were of the greatest importance since favouritism would cause bitter quarrels within the women's quarters and completely upset the harmony in the household. The ancient handbooks on sex answered a real need. They gave—on the whole sound—advice on problems that were of decisive importance to happiness and health of the man and his wives.

The handbooks lay great stress on the necessity of a man understanding the sexual needs and the sexual behaviour of his womenfolk. They teach the householder the fundamental difference in pre- and post-orgasm experiences of man and woman, using the simple simile of fire and water. Then the handbooks apply this simile to the preliminaries of the sexual union, instructing the man as to how he should gradually prepare the woman prior to every copulation. The texts warn a man again and again not to force himself or one of his women to engage in the sexual act if both partners are not in complete emotional harmony.

In the descriptions of the act itself the reader will notice that the importance of making the woman reach orgasm during every coitus is constantly stressed, while it is also significant that the signs by which the man may gauge the degree of the woman's pleasure during the act are described with such meticulous care; cf. sections VII, VIII and IX of the *I-hsin-fang* quotations. It is true that, as mentioned above, they commonly thought that the liquids emitted from a woman's vagina when she reaches orgasm benefit a man's health if he absorbs them through his penis; at the same time, however, consideration

of the woman's right to sexual satisfaction was certainly also in the mind of those who formulated these rules.

Although as a rule I leave it to more competent readers to test these old Chinese theories by modern medical science, I may draw attention here to the fact that the description of the "five signs" as found in the *I-hsin-fang* agrees in all detail with that given in A. C. Kinsey, "Sexual Behaviour of the Human Female" (Philadelphia & London 1953), section "Physiology of sexual response and orgasm", pp. 603, 604, 607 and 613. This does credit to the powers of observation of the ancient Chinese sexologists.

The therapeutic properties of sexual congress are, of course, largely fictitious. Those beliefs are based on magical considerations rather than on physiological facts. Yet modern medical science will agree with the general principle, namely that harmonious and mutually satisfactory sex relations are of basic importance to the health and happiness of man and woman. Also, the principle that various disorders of the system caused by either sexual frustration or over-indulgence can be cured by a period of carefully regulated normal sexual intercourse seems to contain a germ of truth, especially when applied to nervous afflictions.

The cosmic element prevails throughout the handbooks of sex in the same way as it pervades the entire field of ancient Chinese medicine. Attention may be drawn to the section on eugenics, and to the repeated advice that a man regulate his sex life in accordance with seasonal changes. Also the tables of dates and hours propitious for the sexual act, and the instructions regarding the direction of the compass one should assume when copulating in specified seasons (cf. *Tung-hsüan-tzû*, ch. XV) are based on the idea that the physical functions of man are closely connected with the workings of nature.

Section XXV of the *I-hsin-fang* quotations dealing with incubi is of special interest since there are many close parallels to this belief in the folklore of the West. It should be noted that these ancient texts do not yet refer to *foxes* assuming human shape and acting as incubi. As is well known, this belief became extremely popular in China during later centuries and played an important role in Chinese novels and short-stories. This point will be taken up again at the end of Chapter VII.

The pharmaceutical section deserves further investigation by students of ancient Chinese medicine. The greater part of the drugs mentioned are kept in stock by Chinese and Japanese dealers in native medicine to-day and are thus available for analysis. As far as I can see, these ancient recipes for strengthening potency etc. contain no dangerous elements. Their ingredients seem to have been chosen either for their general palliative properties such as a large protein content, or merely because of their suggestive form—as in the case of *Boschniakia glabra*, a fungus that resembles the male member in erection.

Also deer horn belongs to the latter category. Books of the Ming dynasty, on the contrary, mention dangerous aphrodisiacs such as those employing the Telini fly (*pan-mao*), which may cause chronic infection of the urethra.

Finally, I may point again to the absence of references to sexual aberrations. Even phenomena verging on perversity such as fellatio, cunnilingus, anal sex with a woman etc., frequently referred to in later Chinese literature, are not found in these early works.

Among the quotations assembled in the *I-hsin-fang* occur a few isolated passages that do not concern conjugal sexual relations. They are evidently taken from a Taoist book on sexual alchemy, where the sexual act is considered mainly as a means for attaining immortality.

These texts refer to the sexual union as "a battle"—an idea well known also in occidental literature. Peculiarly Chinese is, however, that the "victory" belongs to him or her who, during sexual intercourse, succeeds in obtaining the other's vital essence thereby to increase one's own supply of vital force.

In Chinese literature in general sexual congress is also often referred to as a "battle". This simile is borrowed from an anecdote about the famous strategist Sun-tzû "Master Sun" (6th century B.C.), related in chapter 65 of Szû-ma Ch'ien's *Sih-chi* "Historical Records". The prince of the state Wu ordered Sun-tzû to demonstrate his strategic principles on 180 ladies of the prince's harem. Sun-tzû thereupon divided them into two camps each headed by a "general", one of the favourite consorts of the prince. When the ladies laughed when the military drill began and did not execute Sun-tzû's commands, he had the two "generals" beheaded on the spot, disregarding the frantic protests of the prince. Thus the prince was made to understand the necessity of iron discipline in an army, and he gratefully appointed Sun-tzû as his generalissimo. Playful expressions denoting the sexual act such as *hua-chên* "the flowery battle-array", *wu-ying* "camp of Wu" are borrowed from this anecdote. They are meant in a jocular sense and do not imply that the two partners should hate or harm each other. In some Taoist texts, however, one discerns an element of hostility to the other sex, that is not in accordance with the considerate attitude Taoism in general adopts to woman.

The first reference to these Taoist teachings occurs in Section I of the *I-hsin-fang* quotations. It says:

The Plain Girl said: 'When engaging the enemy the man should consider her as worthless as a tile or a stone, and himself as precious as gold or jade. The man should stop moving as soon as he feels that his semen is excited. Exercising the coitus with a woman is like riding a running horse with a worn rein, or like tottering on the brink of a precipice bristling with bare blades and ready to engulf one.'

Further there are two quotations from the YFPC, both citing a Ch'ung-ho-tzû "Master Ch'ung-ho", apparently the author of a treatise on sexual alchemy.

YFCP—"Master Ch'ung-ho said: 'A man expert in the nurturing of his Yang essence should not allow the woman to know this art. (Her knowing it) will be of no benefit to him and will even cause him to become ill. This is what is meant by the proverb: A dangerous weapon should not be lent to others. For (if one later has to confront this person as an enemy) even if one pulls up his sleeves for the fight, one will not win.

"Again: P'êng-tsu said: 'Indeed if a man wishes to derive great benefit from the sexual act, the best thing is to exercise it with a woman who is ignorant of this art'.

"Master Ch'ung-ho said: 'It is not only the male potency that can be nurtured, the same applies to the female potency. The Queen of the Western Paradise, Hsi-wang-mu, is an example of a woman who obtained the Way (of attaining immortality) by nurturing her Yin essence. Everytime she had had intercourse with a man he would immediately fall ill, but her own face was smooth and transparent so that she had no need for rouge or face powder. She always fed on milk and played the five-stringed lute¹ so that her heart was always harmonious and her thoughts composed and she had no other desires. Also: The Queen of the Western Paradise had no husband, but she liked to copulate with young boys. This secret, however, must not be divulged, lest other women should try to imitate the Queen's methods.

"Further: 'When a woman copulates with a man her heart should be quiet and her thoughts composed. If the man has not yet reached orgasm and the woman feels that she is about to climax, she should restrain herself. If she feels that she is about to respond to him, she should stop moving up and down (yielding to the man's movements) so she does not empty her Yin essence. For if her Yin essence is exhausted (through the orgasm), a vacuum is created in her system that will make her susceptible to disease. Neither should a woman allow herself to become jealous or sad when she sees her man copulate with another woman, for then her Yin essence will become over-excited. She will be afflicted by pains while sitting and standing, and the vaginal emissions will flow spontaneously. These are ills that will cause a woman to wither, and age before her time. Therefore she should guard against this.

"Again: 'If a woman knows the way to nurse her potency and how to effect the harmony of the two essences (*yin* and *yang*), she can transform herself into a man. If, during coition, she is able to prevent the man from absorbing the vaginal emissions, they will flow back and combine with her body, and thus her Yin essence will be nurtured by the man's Yang. In this manner she will not be susceptible to the hundred diseases, her face will be serene and her skin smooth. She will prolong her span of life and not

¹ For lute-playing as a means conducive to meditation cf. my book "The Lore of the Chinese Lute", mentioned on page 68, note 2 above.

grow old but always remain like a young girl. A woman who has learned this secret will feed on her copulations with men, so that she does not need ordinary food and is able to remain five days without eating and yet not become hungry".

The reference to woman changing into man brings us back to the *I-hsin-fang* quotation on hermaphroditism, in section XXIII.

It should be noted that women of the Mongoloid race have as a rule a less developed clitoris than those of other races. The Chinese therefore consider a large clitoris as repulsive, and view that physical trait with suspicion. It appears from the *I-hsin-fang* quotation that the ancient Chinese believed that there were women whose clitorises grew along with the moon until they attained the form of a penis. Following this, they believe that the woman will die unless she has intercourse with another woman. When she has had coitus and the moon begins to wane, the clitoris also shrinks to its regular size. When this happens, the woman is not able to live unless she has intercourse with a man. Thus such persons are alternately two weeks women and two weeks men, and supposedly of an extremely lewd disposition.¹

The statesman and physician Ch'u Têng (flourished ca. 480 A.D.) explains the phenomenon of hermaphroditism as follows:

During the sexual union of a man and a woman, their passions must blend harmoniously. If (at the moment of fertilization) the 'yin-blood' (i.e. the ova) arrive first, the yang-semen will meet it, and the 'blood' of the woman will envelop the man's semen. Thus bones will develop, and those are the basis of the male embryo. If, on the other hand, the yang-semen arrives first, the yin-blood will mix with it, and thus be enveloped by the semen; the 'blood' will stay next to its origin, and create a female embryo. The yang-spirit (*yang-ch'i*) collects in the frontside of the human body, hence that side of a man is heavy; the corpse of a drowned man will therefore float with the face down. But the yin-spirit (*yin-ch'i*) collects in the back of the human body, hence the back of a woman is heavy, and the corpse of a drowned woman will therefore float face upward. Exactly the same applies to drowned quadrupeds.

If, (at the moment of fertilization) *yin* and *yang* arrive at the same time, there will be created an embryo that is neither male nor female, since 'blood' and semen are then equally divided.²

The Ming writer Hsü Ying-ch'ü has another theory. His *Yü-chih-t'ang-t'an-hui* records in chapter 11 a number of historical cases of hermaphroditism.

¹ The same beliefs are found in Japan, where hermaphrodites are indicated by the term *futanari*.

² Cf. Ch'u Têng's treatise *Ch'u-shih-i-shu*, reprinted in SF, the first paragraph. Ch'u Têng's biography (in *Nan-chi-shu* ch. 23, and *Nan-shih* ch. 28) states that he served as prefect, later as censor, and was given a daughter of the Emperor in marriage, and relates in detail some of the miraculous cures effected by him as a physician. His treatise contains a number of interesting medical theories, and deserves a closer study.

He states that in his opinion hermaphrodites are often born to bi-sexual fathers, and adds that during the Hsien-ning (275-279) and T'ai-k'ang (280-289) eras when male homosexuality was very popular, an unusually large number of hermaphrodites were born.

As was already remarked above, the Chinese viewed those unfortunates with profound suspicion, they considered them as *yao* "unnatural monsters" and capable of the blackest crimes. One case is recorded by the Ming writer Chang Ching in chapter 8 of his sequel to the *I-yü-chi*, a famous collection of criminal cases.¹ There it is stated that during the Sung dynasty, in the Hsien-ch'un era (1265-1274) a family in Chekiang had taken a Buddhist nun into their house, to teach their daughters embroidery. One day one of the daughters was found to be pregnant. She told her parents that the nun was really a man who had slept with her; once he himself had said to her: "I have two sexes, when I meet Yang I am a woman, when I meet Yin I am a man". The father brought the nun before the tribunal accusing her of having seduced his daughter. But the nun denied everything, and when the judge had her examined she proved indeed to be a woman. A matron appointed as a guard in the court ordered the nun to be laid on her back, have her private parts smeared with meat broth, and be licked by a dog. When this happened, the nun's clitoris began to swell and grew into the form and size of a penis. The hermaphrodite now confessed having seduced many other girls, and was beheaded.

Since the *I-hsin-fang* quotations cover nearly the entire field of Chinese sexual relations, this is a suitable place for leaving the historical thread for a moment, and to review rapidly sexual aberrations, so as to provide sexologists with a more complete picture. Abnormal and pathological phenomena were of rare occurrence amongst the ancient Chinese people in general, hence this subject is in this case not so repulsive to the layman as it is in many other ancient civilizations.

Sadism in men is rare, pre-Ch'ing literature gives only a few isolated instances. I mention a case recorded in the *Lin-han-shih-hua*, a collection of explanatory notes on famous poems, compiled by the Sung scholar Wei T'ai (flourished ca. 1080). He states that when Lü Shih-lung was prefect of Hsüan-chou he took pleasure in having government prostitutes whipped at the slightest provocation. However, the text adds that after this prefect had fallen in love with a courtesan from Hangchow, he ceased doing so on her request. This made the famous poet Mei Yao-ch'ên (1002-1060) write the following satirical poem—which is the reason why Wei T'ai recorded the occurrence:

¹ Cf. my book "T'ang-yin-pi-shih", pp. 31-32.

Do not beat the ducks,
 For if you beat the ducks,
 You will frighten away the Mandarin-duck.
 And the Mandarin-duck has just alighted in the pond,
 It can not be compared with the old bald stork.
 The old bald stork still wants to fly a long way,
 And has not the Mandarin duck got long wings?¹

Mandarin ducks always swim in pairs, and hence have become in China the traditional symbol of wedded bliss. The poet reminds Lü Shin-lung (the old stork) that he had better be careful not to frighten the courtesan (the Mandarin duck) away, for he is far from being a paragon of manly beauty and she can easily find herself another patron.

Lü's whipping the prostitutes is perhaps not a case of real sadism, but merely an example of extreme severity. And to my mind the term sadism should not be used to indicate taking pleasure in cruelty in general, but only the derivation of sexual pleasure from inflicting pain on others. Chinese history gives many examples of extreme cruelty, but few of those imply that the perpetrator derived sexual satisfaction therefrom. It must be remembered that Oriental standards of cruelty differ from ours, and that it was quite common that severe corporal punishment was meted out for trifling reasons, both in the tribunal, the army etc., and within the household.

The man's inflicting pain on the woman during the coitus is nowhere mentioned in the ancient handbooks of sex, and rarely in erotic and pornographic literature. One instance occurs in the late-Ming erotic novel *Chin-p'ing-mei*. There it is described how a man increases his sexual pleasure by placing prior to exercising the coitus three small pieces of incense on the woman's body, one between the breasts, one on the stomach and one on the *mons veneris*, and then lights them (cf. CPM vol. III, pages 103–104, and again vol. IV, page 59). But in both cases the woman submits to this voluntarily, and the text implies that it increases also her sexual pleasure. In general, however, even mild traits including the inflicting of pain on the woman, such as for instance the man's biting her neck or shoulders, are extremely rare; one example is mentioned below, in the quotation from the *Chao-hou-i-shih*. In this respect Chinese sexual habits compare favourably with those of for instance ancient India. Sanskrit handbooks of sex describe in detail beating, scratching and biting.²

¹ Cf. *Lin-han-shih-hua* as printed in the *Lung-wei-ts'ung-shu*, 3rd collection, chapter 8, page 20b.

² Cf. Vātsyāyana's *Kāmasūtra* Part II, chs. 4, 5, and 7; German translation by Richard Schmidt, Berlin 1912, pp. 152–189. Also Richard Schmidt, "Beiträge zur Indischen

Sadism perpetrated by women on other women is, on the contrary, frequently mentioned, the motive being mostly jealousy and revenge on rivals in love. I cite the following passage in chapter 32 of the early-Ch'ing novel *Ko-lien-hua-ying*.¹ A Mrs. Sung discovers that her husband keeps a secret mistress somewhere outside. She goes to that place with her servants and has the girl taken to her house. She has the girl stripped and exposed in the main hall where she herself beats her with her horsewhip till she is all covered with blood and then cuts off her hair. Mrs. Sung is described in the novel as a manly woman who loves to go out clad in military dress and who is proficient in the martial arts. Therefore Mrs. Sung, next to taking revenge on her rival, also found sexual satisfaction in maltreating the girl, this compensating for her frustration at being a woman herself. I think that here we thus have a case of real sadism. Two similar instances of women trying to compensate sexual frustration by maltreating another woman may be found in the novel *Chün-p'ing-mei*. The first is Golden Lotus whipping and scratching the girl Jasmine (CPM vol. I, pages 110–111), the second describes how the same woman flogs her maid-servant Chrysanthemum (CPM vol. III, pages 62–64).

But such clear cases are rare. Most maltreatment inflicted by men on women, and by women on others of their sex, must be explained by the harsh contemporary laws and customs, rather than by sexual perversion.

Masochism, that is to derive sexual satisfaction from being maltreated or humiliated, especially by members of the other sex, is practically non-existent in pre-Ch'ing Chinese literature. A faint tendency in this direction might be detected in some tales about henpecked husbands. For instance, the Sung writer Chu Yü (ca. 1100 A.D.) tells in his *P'ing-chou-k'o-t'an* (*Shuo-k'u* ed., page 7b) about the extreme case of the famous scholar-official Shên K'uo (1030–1094). Shên married a woman of the surname Chang who used to whip and beat him and pull out strands of his beard till his face was covered with blood; she also maltreated his relatives, but Shên never as much as protested, and when she died he was so disconsolate that he tried to drown himself. Other masochist traces may be found in Ch'ing novels which extol manly

Erotik, das Liebesleben des Sanskritvolkes, nach den Quellen dargestellt", Berlin 1911, pp. 356–395; there a case of a man even killing a woman is recorded. Further Kalyāṇamallā's Anangaranga; English translation by F. F. Arbuthnot and R. F. Burton, Paris, Librairie Astruc, s.d., pp. 112–123. Also later Indian erotic literature abounds in sadist traits. I choose at random a passage from the 15th-century Vaiṣṇava poet Vidyapati on the loves of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, in the translation by Ananda Coomaraswamy and A. Sen: "My wicked lover parched my lips / Abetted by the night, Rahu devoured the moon / He tore my twin breasts with his nails / Just as a lion tears an elephant".

¹ "Flower Shadows behind the Curtain", a sequel to the novel *Chün-p'ing-mei*. German translation by F. Kuhn, entitled "Blumenschatten hinter dem Vorhang" (Freiburg 1956); the passage referred to is there found on p. 525. Engl. ed. by V. Kean publ. London 1959.

and martial heroines. I mention the 19th century novel *Erh-nü-ying-hsiung-ch'üan-chuan*, where the manly and masterful ways of the heroine—who defeats men in wrestling and sword fights and “makes water standing upright like a man”—are praised with evident relish.¹

Homosexuality of men was already discussed briefly on pp. 48, 62 and 92 above. Here it remains to be added that the Ch'ing scholar Chao I (1727–1814), who included a note on homosexuality in ch. 42 of his book *Kai-yü-ts'ung-k'ao*, states that during the Northern Sung dynasty (960–1127) there was a class of men who made their living as male prostitutes, and that in the Ch'eng-ho era (1111–1117) a law was promulgated which prescribed hundred blows with the bamboo and a heavy fine for those. During the Southern Sung dynasty (1127–1279) the activities of such male prostitutes continued, they walked the streets dressed and made up like women, and were organized in a guild. But this, Chao I adds, marked the heyday of male homosexuality, in other periods it was not more evident than normally to be expected in a highly cultured and very mixed society.

As was remarked already above, female homosexuality was, on the contrary, quite common, and viewed with tolerance. Provided that excesses were avoided, female homosexual relations were considered as a custom bound to prevail in the women's quarters, and even praised when it gave rise to self-sacrifice or other beautiful acts of love and devotion. The well-known Ming writer Li Yü (1611–ca. 1680) composed a theatrical play on this subject, entitled *Lien-hsiang-pan*; more details on page 302 below. Next to the usual means of mutual satisfying each other, such as masturbating each other, rubbing the clitoris, cunnilingus etc., a homosexual pair could also use a double *olisbos*, a short ribbed stick made of wood or ivory, and with two silk bands attached to the middle. One woman inserted the rod into her vagina. In order to keep it in place, she tied it around her waist with cord. In this way she was able to play the man's role, satisfying the other woman with the protruding end of the rod, while at the same time enjoying the friction caused by the other end.²

Section XXIV of the *I-hsin-fang* quotations mentions *olisboi* used by women for self-satisfaction, and warns against excessive use. The Ming writer T'ao Tsung-i (flourished ca. 1360) gives in chapter 10 of his *Cho-k'eng-lu* the following

¹ Cf. the German translation of this—rather insipid—novel by F. Kuhn, entitled “Die Schwarze Reiterin”, Zürich 1954, p. 297.

² The double *olisbos* is depicted ECP Plate VIII, its use *ibid.* Plate II. It seems significant that a much-used designation of the vulva is *chi-kuan* “cockscomb”; one feels tempted to conclude that enlargement of the labia minora with cockscomb corrugation was so common in China as to be accepted as characteristic of a normal vulva. Specialists in sexual anatomy will have to decide whether this fact can be accepted as further proof of the wide spread of masturbation among women.



Figure 6

Two young women reading a book together
Same source as Figure 5

description of a kind of plant used for making aphrodisiacs and olisboi. He says:

In the pastures of the Tartars wild horses often copulate with dragons. Drops of the semen will fall down and enter the earth, and after some time put forth shoots resembling bamboo-sprouts, of pointed shape and covered with small scales close together like the teeth of a comb, and with a network of veins, making them very similar to the male member. They are called *so-yang*, and resemble the *Boschniakia glabra*. Some people say that lewd country-women insert these things into their vagina; as soon as they meet the *yin*-essence they will suddenly swell and grow longer. The local people dig these things out, wash them clean, peel them and cut them into thin slices. After these slices have been dried they can be used for making aphrodisiacs, the effect of which is two hundred times greater than of those made from the *Boschniakia glabra*.¹

Apparently the same kind of plant is referred to in the Ming pornographic novel *Chu-lin-yeh-shih*.² It describes an olisbos that had to be soaked in hot water before use; then it swelled and hardened like a male member. The *Chu-lin-yeh-shih* calls this instrument "Cantonese groin", *kuang-tung-p'ang*.

The Ming novel *Chin-p'ing-mei* describes another object used by women for masturbation, called *mien-ling* "Exertion Bell" (*mien* is also written with the character for "Burma"), said to have "originated among barbarian soldiers". It was a small hollow ball of silver placed inside the vagina prior to the coitus.³ The Ch'ing scholar Chao I describes the *mien-ling* in his *Yen-pu-tsa-chi* as follows:

In Burma is found a lascivious bird, the semen of which is used as a sexual aid. People collect the semen which has dropped on stones and enclose it in a small copper container shaped like a conical bronze bell; this is called the 'Burmese Bell'. After I had retired to my country home a man once came who wanted to sell me one. It was as small as a *lungan* fruit (*Nephelium longana*), and perfectly smooth on all sides. Not knowing whether or not this was a genuine specimen, I took it in my hand. I found that as soon as it had become a little warm, it started to move on its own account and a tiny sound emanated from it. As soon as I had put it back on the table, the sound ceased. A queer phenomenon! Since I had no use for it I returned it to the owner.

The Ming scholar T'an Ch'ien says that this object was also used by men. He remarks in his *Tsao-lin-tsa-tsu* s.v. *mien-ling* (last article of the section *Ch'iyung* "Utensils"):

¹ Parallel passages in the *Yu-yang-tsa-tsu* and *Wu-tsa-tsu* are cited by Eberhard, LAC p. 92.

² This and similar passages are translated in ECP, pp. 146-148.

³ Cf. CPM vol. I, page 222; there, however, the descriptive poem which mentions the "barbarian soldiers" (*fan-ping*) has been omitted.

The Burmese Bell is traditionally said to contain the semen of the (mythical) bird P'eng. This bird is of extreme lasciviousness, once it appears all female beings flee. If it meets a Burmese woman, the bird will pick her and want to have intercourse with her. Therefore the aborigines make a puppet of straw, clothe it in woman's clothes, and stick hairneedles and flowers in its head. The bird will then copulate with such a dummy, and leave its sperma on it. The people gather this sperma and encase it in a double golden pellet, of the size of a small pea. If a man inserts this pellet in his member and then has intercourse with a woman, he will find his potency greatly increased. But the barbarians do not sell these things to outsiders, one can only obtain them by capturing a barbarian. The people of Yünnan Province make false ones, shaped like a *chi-li* seed (*Tribulus terrestris*). If one shakes such a seed it will continue moving on its own account, but the genuine ones also produce a sound when they move.

The above descriptions prove that the *mien-ling* is the prototype and origin of the Japanese *rin-no-tama* "tinkling balls", there classified among the *hari-kata*, i.e. artificial means for self-satisfaction employed by women. The *rin-no-tama* have often been described in Western sources, and in the 18th century were also used in Europe.¹ They are globules of thin silver plate, used in pairs; one contains a drop of mercury, the other a metal tongue that vibrates and produces a sound when shaken or struck. The pair is inserted into the vagina and kept in place by a tampon of thin paper; when the woman moves her thighs or rocks herself, their movement and sound produce a pleasurable sensation. Evidently the Chinese *mien-ling* was constructed and used in similar manner as the *rin-no-tama*, the story about the bird's semen being of course an arbitrary embellishment. It would seem that the Chinese also had a special name for the sound-producing globule; chapter 83 of the novel *Chün-p'ing-mei* mentions in a list of sexual aids, next to the *mien-ling*, also a *chan-shêng-chiao* "charm of shaken sounds", which could hardly refer to anything but a sound-producing globule.

The reader will notice that the Chinese upheld the fiction that all such sexual aids came from foreign countries—"Tartar pastures", "barbarian soldiers", "Burmese Bell", "Cantonese groin" (the last term used by a writer

¹ Richard F. Burton says in the Terminal Essay attached to his translation of the "Arabian Nights": "When Pekin was plundered the Harims contained a number of balls a little larger than the old musket-bullet, made of thin silver with a loose pellet of brass inside somewhat like a gretot; these articles were placed by the women between the labia and an up-and-down movement on the bed gave a pleasant titillation when nothing better was to be procured" (The Heritage Press ed., New York 1934, vol. VI, page 3770). For their spread in Europe see Otto Stoll, "Das Geschlechtsleben in der Völkpsychologie" (Leipzig 1907, p. 995); Joest Christian's article "Onanisme", in "Dictionnaire Encyclopédique des Sciences Medicales", etc.

from Kiangsu Province to whom Canton was not China proper). Our speaking about "French letters" and "lettres anglaises" is a parallel phenomenon.

Bestiality in the sense of having intercourse with animals voluntarily—and not by coercion as in the case of Prince Chien's palace-women cited in the beginning of Chapter III—is very rare in pre-Ch'ing literature. The *Hsiao-hsiang-lu* by the T'ang scholar Li Yin mentions the wife of a man called Tu Hsiu-chi who used to have intercourse with a large white dog and, as a result, gave birth to a deformed child (*op. cit.*, *Shuo-k'u* edition, pages 3–4). This seems to be the only old instance known, for all cases occurring in later literature I have seen are variations or elaborations of it.

Incest, common at the courts of the Chou kingdom and at the Imperial Han court soon became rare. The Penal Code classifies it as an "inhuman crime", to be punished with the death penalty in one of its most severe forms.¹

Scatological material is found only in some erotic novels of the Ming period, and mainly in connection with the sexual act. I refer to those passages where the writers evidently took pleasure in describing the semen and vaginal secretions in exaggerated detail; such, however, occur in pornographic rather than in erotic novels, and for instance the *Chin-p'ing-mei* is practically free of them. This novel contains only two passages that are scatological, and both on the same subject, viz. a man urinating in a woman's mouth. Cf. CPM vol. III, p. 312; He (i.e. Hsi-men Ch'ing) urinated, but the woman (i.e. Gold Lotus) did not let him leave. My love, she said, however much you urinate, my mouth will receive it. It is chilly tonight and you might take cold if you got out of bed". And further: Before dawn, the woman (i.e. the girl called Heart's Delight) awoke and took his penis in her mouth. Your fifth mother, said Hsi-men, sucks all night. She would not let me leave the bed to urinate because she feared that I would grow cold, and she swallowed my urine. What does that matter, said the girl, I too would like a drink. And Hsi-men urinated into her mouth. Apart from such passages, scatological material is practically nil.

The ancient Chinese had no inhibitions about answering the calls of nature. The urinal used during the night by men (*yeh-hu*, made of porcelain or bronze and resembling in shape our clinical bed-urinals) and the bucket used by women were openly displayed in the bedroom and used in the presence of servants. Historical records mention people interviewing a friend while sitting on the toilet, and many statesmen and scholars are said to have had the habit of doing much reading and writing while thus engaged. Those who recorded these facts marvelled at the zeal of those persons, they evidently took for granted the unusual place where that zeal was displayed.

¹ Cf. my book "T'ang-yin-pi-shih", page 112.

The same lack of inhibitions is evinced by the custom that existed in China till well into the Ming period, namely that a maid servant accompanied the master when he went to urinate, carrying a bowl with water and a towel for washing his hands afterwards. Until recent years this custom still existed in Japan, in old-fashioned tea-houses. I cite two cases from Chinese literature where this custom led to subsequent sexual intercourse.

The Sung scholar Ch'in Ch'un quotes in his *Chao-hou-i-shih* "Traditional notes about the Empress Chao" (consort of the Han Emperor Ch'êng, 32-7 B.C.) the Empress where she is reminiscing about how her relations with the Emperor began. She then was only a maid servant.

"When I was sent to assist the Emperor when he went to urinate, he soiled his robe. I wanted to take it to wash it for him, but the Emperor said: 'Leave it, it will remind me of you!' Not many days thereafter I was entered into the Imperial seraglio, I still have the scar where he bit my neck. Now thinking back of those former days, I cannot but weep".

(text in SF edition, and *Lung-wei-ts'ung-shu*)

The second example is the incident—famous in Chinese history—which occurred between the T'ang Crownprince (later the Emperor Kao-tsung, 650-683 A.D.) and his father's concubine the Lady Wu. When his father was ill, the Crownprince attended upon him by his bedside. When the prince absented himself to urinate, the Lady Wu accompanied him and kneeling offered him a bowl of hot water to wash his hands. Then he playfully splashed her face with the water and recited the line: "The clear water splashes the powdered face". She capped this with the line: "I humbly receive the favour of rain and mist", which because of the sexual associations of "rain" and "mist" (see page 38 above) constituted a clear invitation to sexual intercourse. Whether the prince then responded to this invitation is a disputed point, but when the old Emperor had died he took the Lady Wu into his harem and later made her his favourite. She became the notorious Empress Wu, who will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

While thus one woman accompanying a man to the toilet was quite common, people did object to a bevy of beauties surrounding one when thus engaged. Chapter 98 of the Dynastic History of the Chin period says in the biography of Wang Tun (4th century; B.D. no. 2238) that the wealthy official Shih Ch'ung (B.B. no. 1709), who was notorious for his extravagance, had more than ten beautiful girls, all gorgeously dressed, always stand at attendance in the toilet room to help the guest "changing clothes". Most of Shih Ch'ung's guests did object to the presence of all these girls. But Wang Tun was a haughty and violent man who readily stripped in front of them and, when the girls made some critical remarks, chased them out through the backdoor.

In Taoist alchemistic writings one finds occasionally descriptions of experiments involving excrements and urine, but these are clearly of a medical and pharmaceutic character. I know of only one place which might be interpreted in scatological sense, viz. the actions of the Taoist adept handling his excrements described in the 25th heading of section 3 (*san-chi*) in chapter 4 of the *Liu-yen-chai-pi-chi*, a collection of miscellaneous notes compiled by the Ming scholar Li Jih-hua (1565-1635).

Neither am I certain whether the curious occurrence recorded by the Ming scholar Yang I (flourished ca. 1540) in his *Kao-p'o-i-tsuan* must be classified as scatological. He says that the scholar Li Mao-yüan (*chin-shih* in 1521) once visited the famous hot spring resort near Loyang, where in the Tang dynasty the beautiful Consort Yang Kuei-fei used to bathe. When taking his bath, Li Mao-yüan noticed red spots on a stone there, and was told that those spots were traditionally explained as traces of the menstrual blood of Yang Kuei-fei. When Li observed those spots "his heart was moved" (*hsin-tung*). When after his bath he was carried to his hostel in his palanquin, he suddenly saw the hand of a woman coming through the curtain; but it immediately disappeared again. That night a woman appeared in his room in the hostel, and said she was the ghost of Yang Kuei-fei, whom he had called up by his interest in the red spots on the stone. This ghost then followed him everywhere, and at last Li fell ill and died (*Shuo-k'u* edition, page 8a). This story has so many possible implications that I must leave it to sexologists to make a proper analysis.

The above are the data concerning pathologia sexualis brought to light by a fairly extensive search covering the main branches of Chinese literature. The reader will agree that this meagre record proves that the ancient Chinese led a sexual life that on the whole can be characterized as normal and healthy.

CHAPTER SEVEN

T'ANG DYNASTY

618-907 A.D.

The T'ang dynasty, which lasted three centuries, was one of the most glorious periods in Chinese history. Both in political power and cultural achievement China was then no doubt the greatest empire in the world of that time.

The manifold Central-Asiatic, Indian and other foreign elements that had entered China during the turbulent years preceding this period, now were digested and incorporated in one, homogeneous Chinese culture. While during the Han period the structure of the Chinese state had received its definite mould, its culture received its final, indelible stamp during the T'ang dynasty.

The T'ang capital Ch'ang-an (modern Sian) was a thriving city, one of the great political and cultural centres of Asia, and the other Chinese towns and cities tried to imitate the metropolitan pattern. Ch'ang-an measured about thirty miles square. The extensive grounds of the Imperial palace with its countless compounds, halls, towers, pavilions and pleasure gardens occupied the central part. The city around it consisted of a maze of streets and alleys, with a few famous temples as landmarks. The population was a motley crowd of a pronounced cosmopolitan character. Buddhist priests from India rubbed shoulders with Nestorian monks and Taoist magicians, merchants from Samarkand with silk-dealers from Soochow. Ambitious men from all over the Empire gathered in the metropolis: young scholars intent on passing the Triennial Examinations for the grade of *chin-shih*, roving strong-arm men looking for an employer, poets and painters seeking a wealthy patron, political schemers intent on finding an influential protector. The city had to cater for this mixed, pleasure-loving crowd. Wine-shops and brothels thrived as never before, and morality in general was at a low ebb.

It was the young scholars who set the tone of this world of sensual pleasure. They studied the Confucianist Classics because they had to know them for passing their examinations, but they certainly did not practise their teachings. It was an established custom that every successful candidate gave a repast in P'ing-k'ang-li, the brothel-quarter near the S.E. corner of the Palace grounds, also called *Pei-li*, the "Northern Quarter". Those who had failed often stayed on

in those congenial surroundings rather than return to their home-town and face the wrath of their parents and relatives. Contemporary literature paints a vivid picture of that demi-monde, composed of types familiar also in the west: the eternal student, the pawnbroker, the sponger, the wealthy country bumpkin, the bully, the pimp and the procurer.

The girls in the "Northern Quarter" ranged from illiterate prostitutes to accomplished courtezans skilled in music and dancing, and with a smattering of the literary language. Most were recruited by purchase from poor families, others were kidnapped, others again drifted into this garish profession on their own free will. Once inside they were registered (*ju-chi*), and entered in one of the countless walled compounds in which the quarter was divided according to the rank of the inmates. They were then given a rigorous training in the various skills of their profession, and their "Adopted mothers" (*chia-mu*, a vulgar term is *pao-mu* "bustard"), did not spare the whip. They could leave the quarter only when hired to entertain guests at an official banquet, or on certain fixed days for attending the religious services in the Pao-t'ang-szû, a famous Buddhist temple nearby. On those days the well-known courtezans put on their best dress and proceeded there in state accompanied by their duennas and their maids. The jeunesse dorée of the city gathered there also on those days to admire the gaily attired crowd and to strike up acquaintances.¹

In this sophisticated milieu proficiency in the arts and letters was, together with good looks, the supreme standard. Reputations were made by a clever couplet, careers broken by a misspelt character. Since the aim of every courtesan and prostitute was to be bought out by a distinguished guest and be taken as his wife or concubine, those girls tried to live up to the high standards set by the young scholars. Many courtezans are said to have been skilled in composing poetry, and many of their poems have been preserved. As a rule, however, everyone of these so-called poetesses has but one or two poems to her name, and one suspects that their contribution was mostly confined to inventing one clever phrase or one original idea, which an obliging admirer then worked out in a poem. Only a few verses seem genuine; though not of great artistic quality, they throw interesting side-lights on that glittering life of alternating joys and sorrows. I translate a poem sent by a courtesan to her departed lover, together with a lock of her hair.

¹ A detailed description of the P'ing-k'ang quarter and its inmates is found in the *Pei-li-chih* by the T'ang writer Sun Ch'i, briefly discussed in TPL vol. I p. 160. An interesting study on the famous P'ing-k'ang courtesan Li Wa is "Notes sur le Li-wa-tchouan", by Tai Wang-shu, published in Chinese with an abstract in French in "Mélanges Sinologiques" (French Institute of Peking, 1951); this article contains a map of the quarter.

Since you left me, my beauty has waned—
 Half I love you, half I hate you.
 If you want to know what my hair looked like,
 Open for me these tresses of rare fragrance.

(*Ch'üan-t'ang-shih*, part II, ch. 10, page 54a)

Then, a poem by Chao Luan-luan, a well known courtesan of P'ing-k'ang-li.

The clouds of my hairlocks are not yet dry,
 The shining side-tresses are raven-black.
 From aside I stick a golden needle in it,
 My coiffure finished I smilingly look round at my lover.

(*Ibid.*, page 60b)

Here and there one also finds some excellent lines, like the following couplet left by the courtesan Hsü Hsüeh-ying (see Figure 7):

The tears on my pillow
 And the rain falling on the steps—
 Separated only by the window-pane
 They drip down all night long.

(*Ibid.*, page 61b)

Only two courtezans left a more substantial poetical oeuvre. One was Yü Hsüan-chi, of the capital, the other was Hsüeh T'ao, who lived in Chengtu, the main city of Szuchuan Province. The T'ang dynasty was the golden age of poetry, and famous man-poets wrote countless poems where they make women express their feelings. But such verses are of distressing uniformity, they describe always the same sorrows in the traditional language, and as often as not do not ring true. In the case of Yü Hsüan-chi and Hsüeh T'ao, however, we have two gifted poetesses who themselves describe their emotions. While in the preceding centuries also a few women wrote poetry, we have of each of those but one or two poems, and many scholars doubt their authenticity. Of both courtezans mentioned, however, about fifty poems survive, style and content bear the mark of their different personalities and they are doubtless genuine. Since their career and literary oeuvre illustrate the position of woman and sexual relations of that time, these two courtezans are here discussed in somewhat greater detail.

Yü Hsüan-chi (ca. 844–ca. 871) was born in the capital Ch'ang-an, in a poor family. Being a good-looking girl with a natural talent for song and dance and with a craving for gay life, she soon started mixing with the crowd of pleasure-seeking young students. Associating with them she learned much about

徐月英



Figure 7

The T'ang courtesan Hsü Hsüeh-ying

Same source as Figure 4

Dress is Southern Sung rather than T'ang

literature, and started to compose poetry. She soon became so popular that she could live by what her lovers gave her, and she was not officially registered as a prostitute. While still very young she was taken as concubine by a young scholar called Li I, who after he had passed his examination took her back to his home-town. His wife, however, did not like her husband's new love, and there followed a harassing time of quarrels and conciliations, separations and periods of living together again. Reading the numerous poems that must date from this part of her life one obtains the impression that Yü Hsüan-chi was a passionate woman of strong personality who would not readily give up a man she was in love with. Her poetry is vigorous and original, she disdained the conventional clichés used in love-poetry of that time. I translate a poem which she sent to Li I during one of their periods of separation.

The mountain road is steep,
 The stone paths dangerous,
 But it is not the road that pains me,
 It is my love for you.
 Hearing the tinkling of the breaking ice,
 I think of your lovely voice,
 The snow on the far mountain tops,
 Reminds me of your face.
 Don't listen to vulgar songs,
 Don't drink the spring wine.
 Don't invite leisurely guests
 For long nights of chess.
 Remember our sworn bond of love
 That should last forever
 Even if our living together,
 Tarries to be restored.
 Although I hate this lonely trek
 Alone on the long wintry day
 My hope is at last to meet you
 When a full moon is in the sky.
 Separated from you,
 What can I offer?
 Only this one poem,
 Stained with bright tears.

(*Ch'üan-t'ang-shih*, part II, ch. 10, p. 75b)

But Li I tired of this demanding mistress, and finally their relation was definitely broken off. Yü Hsüan-chi had become interested in Taoism, and

now she entered the Taoist monastery Hsien-i-kuan in the capital, as a nun. At this time many Buddhist and Taoist nunneries had a doubtful reputation. They were a haven of refuge not only for pious girls but also for widows and divorced women who had no family to return to, and at the same time for loose women who wished to lead a free life, without registering officially as prostitutes. Gay dinners and drinking bouts were held there with the connivance of the religious authorities who made good profits by supplying wine and food to the guests. In the Hsien-i-kuan Yü Hsüan-chi met a famous young poet of that day called Wên T'ing-yün (flourished ca. 850), well-known both for his excellent verse and his dissolute life. She fell in love with him, and for some time was his inseparable companion on his ramblings through the country. But she could not bind for long this erratic poet, and he left her. Below is the first half of a poem she then addressed to him.

Bitterly I search for the right words,
 Writing this poem under the silver lamp.
 I can not sleep the long night,
 I fear the lonely coverlets.
 In the garden outside
 Is the sad sound of fluttering autumn leaves
 The moon shines forlornly
 Through the gauze window-panes

(*Ibid.*, page 76b)

Yü Hsüan-chi resumed the wild life in the Hsien-i-kuan, where she held open house for all elegant young scholars and officials, and had numerous amorous attachments. But as she grew older her popularity waned, and one after the other she lost her influential patrons. She got into financial difficulties and became involved in trouble with lower police-officials. Finally she was—probably wrongly—accused of having beaten a maid-servant to death, and was convicted and executed.

Personality and career of the courtesan Hsüeh T'ao (768–831 A.D.) present a complete contrast. She came from a good family in the capital, her father was an official who saw to it that she received a literary education. When she was only nine years old she could compose poetry. Tradition says that her father once told her to make a poem on a tree, and that she then wrote the couplet: "The boughs meet the birds alighting from north and south, the leaves move with every coming gust of wind". He was greatly distressed, for he found in this couplet evidence of his daughter's fundamentally lascivious disposition. He took her with him when he was sent to a post in Szuchuan Province, where he died leaving her in straitened circumstances. Since she

was a beautiful girl of extravagant tastes, she had herself registered as a prostitute in Chengtu, and soon became famous because of her wit and beauty. Some of the greatest poets of that day frequented her when they visited Szuchuan, i.e. Po Chü-i (772-846) and his bosom friend Yüan Chên (779-831). She had close relations especially with the latter, and continued to correspond with him long after their separation. She became the favourite of the great T'ang general Wei Kao (745-805) who for many years was military governor of Szuchuan Province, and acted more or less as his official hostess. He apparently left her well provided for. After his death she retired to a villa in Huan-hua-hsi near Cheng-tu and devoted herself to literary and artistic pursuits, acquiring fame by inventing a new kind of ornamental paper for writing poetry on that still bears her name. She died at an advanced age, the recognized arbiter of fashion in that part of the country.

Hsüeh T'ao (Figure 8) is the example of a courtesan who succeeded in life. She evidently knew how to manage her love affairs, and did not let passion interfere with practical interests; when she had offended Yüan Chên when she was drunk, she wrote ten sentimental poems for him to show how sorry and unhappy she was, and was duly reinstated in his favour. Her poetry is more polished than that of Yü Hsüan-chi, it abounds in the literary allusions fashionable at that time; but her work is rather shallow, it lacks the originality and forceful expression of that of the Taoist nun.

Below I translate a poem made when she visited the Wu-shan Temple. She connects this scenic spot with the mountain mentioned in Sung Yü's poetical essay discussed on page 38 above.

We visited Kao-t'ang
 Gibbons cried wildly in the woods.
 The path entered the purple mist:
 There was the fragrance of trees and plants.
 But the beautiful mountain scenery
 Still mourned the poet Sung Yü,
 And the murmuring streams
 Seemed to weep for King Hsiang.
 Every morning, every night
 His fairy-lover descended the Yang Terrace,
 Because of the "rain" and the "clouds",
 He lost his kingdom.
 Sadly and forlorn
 A few willows stand before the hall,
 In spring their leaves try in vain
 To compete with curved eyebrows

(*Ibid.*, page 63b)

薛壽



Figure 8

The T'ang courtesan Hsüeh T'ao

Same source as Figure 4

Dress is Southern Sung rather than T'ang

The courtesan had become a social institution, an indispensable part of elegant life both in the capital and in the provinces. It had become *bon-ton* that every official or writer who moved in society kept next to his wives and concubines one or more dancing girls as his personal attendants. While his wives and concubines stayed home, a man would take these girls along with him everywhere, to enliven his parties with their song and dance, pour out the wine, and keep the conversation going. The famous poet Li T'ai-po had two of them, Po Chü-i had several ones at different times of his life, and even the dour Confucianist scholar Han Yü (768-824) had a dancing girl who was his inseparable companion. Countless poems where a scholar describes outings with friends have titles such as, for instance, "Composed on an excursion to X., taking courtesans with us (*hsi-chi*)".

These girls had an amazing capacity for wine, another reason why they were congenial company. For it must be noted that during the T'ang and preceding dynasties intemperance in drinking was a common foible, viewed with much tolerance. At banquets both men and women were wont to drink excessively, even at court and in the Emperor's presence general intoxication was a common occurrence, and drunken brawls in the streets frequently seen. In this respect the Chinese way of life changed completely during the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties. Then the consumption of alcohol grew much less, and to be seen drunk outside the house was considered a disgrace. Foreigners who visited China in the 19th century were favourably impressed by the fact that they never saw drunken people in the streets, not even in the port cities. But in the T'ang dynasty the situation was quite different.

The institution of the courtesans was based on social factors, and it was these that caused its continued flourishing during later centuries. We have seen in Chapter II that this institution originated in the Chou dynasty, when the Princes kept their troupes of *nü-yüeh*, trained female entertainers, and we saw that later the possession of such a troupe was an indispensable attribute of social prominence. We saw further in Chapter III that when the changing economical situation limited the keeping of private troupes to the ruling families, the commercial brothels provided professional entertainers to all who could afford to pay for their company.

Although the role of the courtesans was variously emphasized in different periods, there can be no doubt that it was always primarily a social one, its sexual aspects being of secondary importance. T'ang literature mentions courtesans mainly as the boon companions of the *jeunesse dorée* in the capital, and in the larger cities that copied the metropolitan social pattern. At the same time, however, the courtesans played also an as important but less publicized role in the daily life of the middle and upper classes in general.

The social relations of officials, literati, artists and merchants were conducted mainly outside the house, in restaurants, temples, brothels or scenic spots in the open. Such gatherings were not only the main means for relaxation in congenial company, they formed also an integral part of the official and business routine. Every official keen on retaining or improving his position had to entertain at all times his direct colleagues, and frequently his superiors and inferiors; and every well-to-do merchant had to feast his business relations in order to prepare or conclude important deals. In the T'ang dynasty one's own women still could, with certain restrictions, take part in those gatherings,¹ but a really unconstrained atmosphere could be created only when the female element was represented by professional entertainers. An official could ensure promotion by introducing his superior or an influential politician to a discreetly chosen courtesan, and a merchant could by the same means obtain a much-needed credit or an important order. Obviously one's own womenfolk could not serve such ulterior purposes. The point need hardly be elaborated, *mutatis mutandis* there are close parallels in our modern Western society. When after the 13th century the Neo-Confucianist teachings, combined with emotional factors engendered by the Mongol occupation, caused an increasing tendency to enforce the separation of the sexes, the need for unattached female entertainers at private and public parties became even more imperative than before.

The high-class prostitution of the courtezans was well organized. The brothel keepers were united in trade-associations, and paid taxes to the government. In return they were entitled to the same official protection as other commercial enterprises. If, for instance, a girl broke her contract, she could be prosecuted by the authorities—although as a rule the brothel keepers and their bullies proved perfectly capable of dealing with such cases themselves. On the other hand the girls also could denounce cruel or unjust owners; they usually did so through the intermediary of an influential admirer. Although there were among the courtezans also "amateurs" such as Yü Hsüan-chi who, as described above, did not register as prostitute and managed her own affairs, such were the exception. Amateur prostitutes were frowned upon by the authorities, they were outside their control and paid no taxes.

¹ The large measure of freedom married women enjoyed during the T'ang dynasty is attested *la.* by the amusing "Ballad of the Wayward Young Wife" (edited on the basis of a T'ang manuscript found in Tun-huang, by P. Demiéville, under the title "La nouvelle mariée acariâtre", in "Asia Major", New Series vol. VII, London 1959, p. 59 sq.). This young married woman does not heed the household, she gads about alone in the market, insults her husband and her parents-in-law, and starts throwing things about at the slightest provocation. Finally the husband gets rid of her through a divorce by mutual consent. Demiéville points out that among the samples of T'ang popular literature found in Tun-huang there are many more pieces of similar tenor.

Yü Hsüan-chi's lawsuit would probably not have taken such a fatal turn if she had been a duly registered professional.

Courtezans had their recognized place in society, theirs was considered a legitimate profession, to which no opprobrium was attached; contrary to the low-class harlots, they were not subject to any social disabilities. Every city took pride in its courtezans, and they figured largely in all public festivities. We shall see in Chapter VIII that during the Sung dynasty they had i.a. a regular function in wedding-ceremonies. Of course the ultimate aim of every courtesan was to be redeemed by a man who loved her, but those who failed to find a husband were as a rule reasonably provided for; when grown too old for entertaining guests they stayed on in the brothel, earning their living by acting as teachers in music and dancing of the younger inmates.

In the licensed quarters the girls were classified according to their accomplishments. Those who had to rely chiefly on their physical attraction constituted as a rule the lowest class. They had to live together in one apartment, and were strictly supervised by the management. Those skilled in music and dancing and those possessing literary talents formed the higher class. Most of them had a bedroom and salon of their own, and although bound to obey the owner of the house, they enjoyed more freedom of movement, and could pick and choose their suitors. It was in the interest also of the brothel keeper to encourage popular girls to be difficult about granting their favours, for thereby their reputation was enhanced, and fame justified higher fees for their attendance at parties. Moreover, once a courtesan had become famous, the chances of her being bought out by a wealthy patron increased, to the advantage of herself and her owner.

The redeeming of a famous courtesan was a costly undertaking but—quite apart from the emotional motives involved—such a transaction was nearly always a sound investment on the part of the buyer. Clever girls who kept their ears open at the parties they attended and who could show an intelligent interest in the conversations going on there, gathered much inside information on the official and business world. If they liked the man who redeemed them, they could give him valuable advice. And he who redeemed a girl who had had a previous liaison with some exalted person, thereby often gained that person's special favour. Such a former patron would take a fatherly interest in the protector of the girl he had been intimate with, and would help him gladly. Especially if brought in the proper mellow mood by some discreet flattery, the new protector remarking for instance that although he did of course his best to please her, it seemed that somehow or other she could never forget some previous attachment . . . Such passages in Chinese novels have a familiar ring for us too.

Next to social factors, as a matter of course also the satisfaction of carnal desire contributed to the continued flourishing of the institution of the courtezans, but there are strong reasons for assuming that this was a factor of secondary importance. In the first place, those who could afford cultivating relations with courtezans had to belong at least to the upper middle class, and hence had several women of their own at home. Since, as we have seen above, it was their duty to give those wives and concubines complete sexual satisfaction, it is hardly to be expected of a normal man that sexual need would urge him to intercourse with outside women. There was of course the desire for variety and for new experience, but this desire explains only occasional escapades, it does not supply sufficient motivation for nearly daily association with professional women. Glancing through the literature on this subject one receives the impression that next to the necessity of complying with an established social custom, men frequented the company of courtezans often as an escape from carnal love, a welcome relief from the often oppressive atmosphere of their own women's quarters and the compulsory sexual relations. In other words, the reason was the craving for unconstrained, friendly relations with women without any resulting sexual obligations: with a courtesan a man could develop a certain intimacy without being obliged to carry it through to actual sexual intercourse. And if he grew tired of such a relationship, it could be broken off as easily as it was begun. It goes without saying that in this world of "wind and flowers" there also occurred violent passions which often resulted in tragic conflicts; but as a rule such entanglements were the exception.

The detached attitude adopted by many men towards the courtezans they associated with explains the prominence given in the biographies of famous girls to their social accomplishments. Their skill in dancing, singing, and witty repartee are as a rule mentioned first, while their physical attractions are mentioned in the second place. Not a few celebrated courtezans were not even particularly handsome. It also explains the highly sentimental flavour that pervades Chinese poetry and prose where the writers describe their relations with courtezans. This branch of literature gives the impression that often those relations bore a platonic character. It further explains the protracted and complicated courtship most admirers of courtezans loved to engage in. Evidently their aim was not so much to sleep with the object of their attentions—failure in reaching this aim was mostly not resented by the suitor, nor considered as a disgrace by public opinion—as to amuse oneself by an elegant relaxation that at the same time established one's reputation as a man of the world.

My view that sexual intercourse played a secondary role in men's association

with courtezans is supported also by the economical aspects of high-class prostitution. A girl could twice in her career bring in a large, lump sum of money. The first time was when, after having entered the brothel as a virgin, and after having acquired a reputation of skill in entertaining, she was deflowered. The guest concerned had to pay a high fee, and had to organize a sumptuous banquet in the house to which the girl belonged. The second time was when she was bought out. The regular income of the brothel, however, was derived from the feasts held there—the establishment catering for the wine and the food—and from the fees for the courtezans attending those banquets, and parties held elsewhere. The fees paid for sleeping with the girls (called *ch'ant'ou*) represented but a fraction of the brothel's total income. As a matter of course there were for guests so inclined the usual facilities for having sexual intercourse with the girls; but although it was comparatively easy to sleep with a courtesan of lower standing, in the case of an accomplished courtesan of the first rank this was a complicated undertaking. Preliminary courtship including the giving of presents was required, and both the management and the girl herself had to give their consent. Moreover, prudent suitors would in all cases first ascertain by discreet inquiries whether the girl concerned did not happen to have a liaison on with some influential admirer. For as soon as one tried to sleep with such a girl, one was at her mercy; one never knew whether or how she would report such advances to her patron of that moment, and though some patrons might consider themselves flattered, others might take offense. It would seem that as a rule neither the management nor the girls went out of their way to encourage sexual intercourse, the reason being that whereas the proceeds were small in comparison to those accruing from mere attendance at parties, it implied the risk of the girl becoming ill or pregnant.

As to venereal disease, we shall see in Chapter X that syphilis was apparently not introduced into China until the 16th century. But contemporaneous medical literature indicates that in T'ang and pre-T'ang times there existed milder venereal diseases, especially some forms of gonorrhea. The texts give accurate descriptions of chronic ulcers on the typical places of the genitals of men and women, stricture of the urethra, and symptoms pointing to gonorrhea. Although these ailments were not yet recognized as being transmitted by the coitus, T'ang physicians did realize that the promiscuity of venal love encouraged the spread of contagious diseases.

Concerning pregnancy of courtezans, most midwives were conversant with some crude methods of abortion, and if a child was born the management would often look after it, although infanticide was also common. All these factors together suggest the expediency of limiting sexual intercourse of guests and courtezans to the minimum required.

In the above we have spoken only of the high-class prostitution of the courtezans. Probably there existed in T'ang and pre-T'ang times also low-class, cheap brothels which catered to the sexual needs of the common people. However, since such places lay outside the sphere of interest of literati and historians, in contemporary literature there is practically no information on this subject. It is only in Sung and Ming texts that such establishments are occasionally referred to, as we shall see in Chapter VIII.

Perhaps such low-class brothels originated from, or were connected with the government-owned brothels. The inmates of the latter were mainly recruited from three classes of women, viz. (a) female criminals condemned to serving as government-prostitute, (b) female relatives of criminals whose punishment included the clause *chi-mo*, i.e. that all their close relatives became slaves, and (c) female prisoners of war. These women therefore belonged to the "lower castes", a special social group whose status was defined by law and the members of which were subject to various social disabilities, i.a. the prohibition to marry outside their caste. Thus the status of these prostitutes was fundamentally different from that of the courtezans, whose bondage was not based on a legal decision but only on a private commercial transaction, and who consequently became free again as soon as they had been redeemed, or paid the debt to their owner. The prostitutes of the "lower castes" were destined for the army and navy, and for the lower personnel of various civilian governmental institutions. The lot of these women was of course a terrible one, they could only be freed from their life of misery if the government issued a general pardon, or if a higher official became interested in one of them and took her into his own household. As we shall see in Chapter VIII, during the Sung dynasty officials could buy or rent those women from the government.

One obtains the impression, however, that the boundary between commercial and government prostitution was not always clearly marked, it seems to have wavered considerably in various times and places. The history of prostitution in China is a little known subject. In Japan appeared in the 18th century already several extensive and well-documented histories of Japanese prostitution, but the excessive prudery of the Ch'ing literati prevented them from undertaking a similar historical study of prostitution in China; they limited their efforts to casual essays on the lives of famous courtezans of old and later times. It is hoped that some day a modern scholar will devote a special study to this complicated subject.

Such an investigation should include also the relation between commercial and government prostitution on the one hand, and on the other the recruiting of women for the Imperial Palace. The texts confine themselves as a rule to such simple statements as *pei-hsüan ju-kung* "having been selected, she was

entered into the Palace". It would seem that the Palace women consisted of girls offered as tribute, both by the Provinces and foreign and vassal countries; of daughters of prominent families keen on obtaining the Imperial favour; and of women recruited by Palace agents. The Palace agents used to scour the entire Empire for beautiful and accomplished women, and apparently took them wherever they found them, not despising even commercial or government brothels. When a number of such women had been collected, the eunuchs and duennas sorted them out. The best were chosen for the Imperial harem, those skilled in the arts for the *chiao-fang* (see page 189), and the remainder assigned menial tasks in the Palace. I repeat, however, that these remarks represent only my general impression gained from Chinese literature; they are given here under reserve, pending the completion of a specialized investigation of the subject.

The amenities of life had greatly developed. Under Central-Asiatic influence a kind of folding-chair had come into use, and people also sat on low benches of beautifully carved and lacquered wood. Whereas during the Han and Liu-ch'ao periods pieces of this class of furniture were only one or two inches high, not more than a kind of raised floor-mats in wooden frames (see Plate III) now they were real benches or sofas of two or three feet high, and used both for sitting and reclining. Further there were various kinds of low tables and wooden cupboards. The floor was covered with reed-mats and rugs, and people still took off their shoes upon entering the house. Inside they walked on thick-soled socks, probably not unlike the Japanese *tabi*. Walls and ceilings were decorated with paintings, and movable screens bore pictures and specimens of calligraphy.

Contemporaneous pictures and funerary statuettes give a general idea of the T'ang costume. The main upper garment of both men and women was the same as that used during preceding periods, namely a long robe, single in summer, lined in winter. Underneath it both sexes wore a pair of trousers.

The robes of women resembled the *kimono* of Japanese ladies—which in fact was derived from T'ang models.¹ But in addition thereto T'ang women also wore an apron-like garment, tied below the bosom with a silk band.

¹ The kimono worn by Japanese men is also based on the Chinese costume. The fundamental difference between Chinese and Japanese dress lies in the underclothes. Whereas both Chinese men and women wear trousers next to the body, Japanese men wear a *fundoshi* or stringed loincloth, and Japanese women a *koshimaki*, a piece of cloth wound round the hips and hanging down to the feet, not unlike the Indonesian sarong. Some scholars adduce these underclothes as proof of the Polynesian strain in the Japanese race.

This apron seems not to have been introduced into Japan, but in Korea it forms today still an integral part of women's dress.

Plate VI is a section of a hand-scroll ascribed to the Tang painter Chou Fang, who flourished ca. 800 A.D., and who was especially famous for his pictures of human figures. It represents a lady sitting with the left leg crossed over the other, to support the seven-stringed lute (*ch'in*) which she is tuning. With her right hand she turns the tuning-peg, with the left she tests the pitch of the string. She is attended by a maid-servant who carries a tray. The lady is dressed for indoors, she wears the apron-like garment mentioned above, apparently made of some coarse material. Her hair is done up in a simple chignon. The maid wears a sash wound several times round her waist, and tied in front. This sash is the origin of the Japanese *obi*. Japanese women tie it in an elaborate bow on their back, but old-fashioned geisha-costumes still have the bow in front, as was the custom in T'ang China.

Plate VII is again a section of a hand scroll attributed to Chou Fang, representing Palace ladies amusing themselves. The lady shown here is teasing a small dog with a long-handled fly-whisk. She wears an inner robe of embroidered silk, there over an apron of plain red silk, fastened under the bosom with a narrow silk band. Then a loose outer robe of a transparent brown material, through which her bare shoulders are visible, and a brocade scarf completes her costume. Ladies in ceremonial dress depicted on later T'ang and early Sung paintings recovered from Tun-huang¹ often have very long scarves draped round their shoulders, the ends of which hang down till the floor (cf. Plate XI). These long scarves seem to have formed an indispensable part of a lady's ceremonial dress. The hair is done up in a high chignon, with a large flower stuck in the top, and decorated in front with a pendant of beads. The hairpins are simple, one can just see the curved ends protruding from the hair. Note the generous *décolleté*, and the tufted, artificial eyebrows, painted on with cobalt.

Lips were rouged with lip-salve, and on the cheeks large, well-marked

¹ Sir Aurel Stein discovered in 1906 at Tun-huang, an oasis on the border of Kansu Province, an old temple-complex with a hoard of manuscripts and paintings that had been walled up ca. 1000 A.D. He acquired part of them, which are now in the British Museum. The next year the French Sinologue Paul Pelliot visited the site and purchased a large number of items for French institutions. Sir Aurel Stein came back in 1916, and made further purchases. The rest was taken by the Chinese Government, but a number of items strayed to private Chinese and Japanese collections. The bulk of the material dates from the T'ang period, and furnishes invaluable data for comparison. We know, for instance, that Chou Fang's painting a section of which is reproduced on Plate VII, if not an original, is at least a close copy, because the dress of the lady tallies with that of a court lady found in Tun-huang (cf. Y. Harada "A Study of Clothing as appearing on Paintings from the Western Regions", in Japanese, *Memoirs of the Tōyō-bunko*, vol. 4, Tōkyō 1925, Plate 17 no. 1).

patches of rouge were added directly under the eyes. Red and black mouches were painted on the forehead, chin and cheeks. According to a T'ang author the mouches served originally to conceal marks of branding; he states that jealous wives would often brand the faces of concubines out of spite, or as a punishment for some offense.¹ Women also added often a larger *tache de beaulé* on the forehead, shaped like a moon-sickle and painted on with yellow salve; this spot was called *huang-hsing-yen* "yellow-star mouche", or *mei-chien-huang* "yellow spot between the eyebrows".² This fashion continued till well into the Ming period; women painted by the famous Ming artist T'ang Yin (1470-1523) nearly always show this spot on their forehead. But the custom seems to have fallen into abeyance during the Ch'ing dynasty. As further personal adornment ladies wore earrings, colliers, bracelets and fingerings.

It should be noted that women's necks were bare and that often a large part of the bosom was exposed. This applied especially to dancing girls. Funerary statuettes prove that they wore only one thin robe, open at the neck; it was fastened by a band just below the breasts, then trailed down as a flaring, plaited skirt. The sleeves were excessively long, their swirling played an important role in dancing, and is frequently referred to in prose and poetry. Figure 9 shows a dancing girl with the bosom half bare. But other funerary statuettes prove that the girls often danced with naked breasts. It is clear that the Chinese of the T'ang period did not object to women showing their bare throats and bosoms. During the Sung dynasty and after, however, bosom and neck were covered by the upper rims of the robe, and then by the high, tight-fitting collar of an under-jacket; the high collar has remained a distinctive feature of Chinese women's dress till the present day.

The men wore indoors wide, baggy trousers, and thereover a long-sleeved robe. The right lapel was folded over the left, and kept in place by a silk sash wound round the waist. Thus men's and women's dress were essentially identical. Outdoors the men added a second robe, slightly smaller, so that the upper rims of the lapels of the first robe showed at the neck, and the ends of its sleeves protruded from under those of the upper robe; often these protruding sleeves were folded back like broad cuffs. Round their long hair, done up in a top-knot and kept in place by a hair-pin, they wound a piece of stiff black gauze, tied at the back of the head, and the long ends of which either hung

¹ Cf. Tuan Ch'êng-shih (died 863 A.D.) in his *T'u-yang-tsa-tsu*, SPTK edition ch. 8, page 45.

² The Ch'ing scholar Yü Ch'êng-hsieh (1775-1840), one of the leading feminists of that time, has thoroughly treated the origin and history of this yellow spot in ch. 4 of his *Kuei-szu-ts'un-kao*.

down, or were starched so as to stand out like wings. They also wore ready-made black caps of the same material, of varying shape and size. All this headwear was kept on inside the house, and even in the intimacy of the bedroom, caps were doffed only when entering the bedstead. Some erotic pictures even show men keeping their caps on while engaging in sexual congress in bed, but this may be intended as a jocular trait.

When formally dressed, men wore over the other robes an outer one of brocade or embroidered silk with a broad collar high up round the neck, and a leather belt incrustated with plaques of jade or horn. The shape of the cap, the pattern of the robe, and the style of the belt indicated official rank, as



Figure 9

T'ang dancing girl, sketched after a T'ang funerary statuette

did various badges carried suspended from the belt. High officials had caps embroidered and trimmed with gold, and with a piece of jade or a precious stone inserted in the centre, in front.¹

Plate VIII, a section of an ancient Japanese copy of a T'ang scroll depicting the Ten Kings of Hell, shows a magistrate on horseback, accompanied by two constables. He wears the judge's cap with two stiffened wings. His outer robe is closed high round the neck, below part of the lighter-coloured inner robe is visible. Pictures of men in official dress found on paintings recovered in Tun-huang prove that the light-coloured under-robe always showed through the side-slit of the official outer robe. Note the wide trousers, hanging down over the riding-boots. The constables wear shorter, jacket-like outer robes, and straw shoes. The one in front carries a staff, the one at the back the magistrate's sword.

Men and women of standing wore boots or shoes with upturned points. The custom of binding women's feet did not yet exist in this period. For additional information on men's and women's dress during the later years of the T'ang period, the reader is referred to pp. 236 sq., a description of the early Sung costume that was by and large the same as that of the later years of the T'ang dynasty.

As to the ideal of male and female beauty of that time, one notices that the men cultivated a virile, even martial appearance. They liked thick beards, whiskers and long moustaches, and admired bodily strength. Both civilian and military officials practised archery, riding, sword fighting and boxing, and proficiency in these arts was highly praised. Contemporary pictures, as for instance those by Chou Fang reproduced on Plates VI and VII prove that these men liked sturdy women, with round, chubby faces, well-developed breasts, slender waists but heavy hips. This preference is found also in old Japan, the picture scrolls of the Heian period show ladies as portly as those on T'ang paintings. However, this ideal was modified soon afterwards. During the N. Sung dynasty people began to prefer more slender women. The great poet Su Shih (better known as Su Tung-p'o) said when he saw a picture of women by Chou Fang:

¹ The "cap-jewel", being located right above the spot between the eyebrows, has mystic associations. It is of interest to note that the piece of jade incrust in the "Phoenix forehead" of a seven-stringed lute and technically called *ch'in-pao* "treasure of the lute", is considered the most vital spot of that instrument which—as shown by the names of its component parts—is viewed as the counterpart of a living human being (cf. my book "The Lore of the Chinese Lute", Tōkyō 1940, p. 98 sq.). Curiously enough I discovered by practical experiments that when trying to amplify the sounds of the *ch'in* by technical means, the best place to attach the microphone to the instrument is that of the *ch'in-pao*; thus this spot must indeed be an important nexus of vibrations.

The eyes of this old student have seen many strange things,
But I still marvel at the fat women in Chou Fang's pictures.¹

We shall see in Chapter X that by the end of the Ming dynasty the ideal of male and female beauty was changing to the other extreme, which prevailed throughout the subsequent Ch'ing period; then emaciated and fragile-looking women with thin, oval faces were considered the summum of beauty. And the Tokugawa Japanese again followed this fashion, as evinced by the frail ladies of the later *ukiyo-e* prints.

Life at the T'ang Imperial court was of an unprecedented magnificence. The palace ceremonial prescribed an unending sequence of feasts and banquets, all enlivened by music and dancing, and during which enormous amounts of alcohol were consumed. There was set aside a special section of the palace for the training of the hosts of dancers, musicians, actors and acrobats needed for those feasts. This section was called *chiao-fang* "training centre", and next to Chinese artists also hundreds of Central-Asiatic, Indian, Korean and Indo-Chinese singers and dancers dwelled there.

The rulers favoured sometimes Taoism, then Buddhism, and religious feasts were celebrated with much pomp and circumstance. The Confucianist Classics were designated by the government as the basis for the literary examinations, and Confucianist scholars had great influence in affairs of state. But in the daily life of the court and the common people their teachings hardly counted.

The sexual relations of the Emperor were subject to a protocol even more elaborate than that of former times. The ever-increasing number of women in the seraglio made a meticulous book-keeping necessary: the date and hour of every successful sexual union, the dates of menstruation of every woman, and the first signs of pregnancy were carefully noted down. Special measures were necessary to prevent confusion of identity. The *Chuang-lou-chi* "Notes of the Dressing Room" by Chang Pi (flourished ca. 940) states that in the beginning of the K'ai-yüan era (713-741) every woman with whom the Emperor had slept received a stamp on her arm, with the appropriate legend "Wind and moon (i.e. sexual dalliance) are forever new". This stamp was rubbed with a certain cinnamon ointment which made it indelible (*Lung-wei-t'ung-shu* edition, page 7a). None of the hundreds of palace women could claim having received the Emperor's favour without being able to show this stamp. The same source quotes some flowery expressions for menstruation, viz. "red flood" (*hung-ch'ao*), the "Peach-flower fluid" (*t'ao-hua-kuei-shui*), and "entering

¹ Quoted by the Ming scholar Hu Ying-lin (1550-ca. 1590) in his *Shao-shih-shan-fang pi-ts'ung*, version I-lin-hsüeh-shan, ch. 4, the article on Chou Fang.

the monthly period" (*ju-yüeh*). Sexual relations within the palace were conducted in an atmosphere of *sans-gêne*; the Emperor used to bathe together with his ladies in the palace ponds completely naked.

Since the Emperor when dallying with his women was especially exposed to murderous attacks, stringent security measures were taken. All doors giving access to the inner apartments were kept barred, and heavily guarded. In order to prevent a woman attacking her Imperial lover, it was an old Palace custom that the particular woman chosen to share the Emperor's couch was wrapped stark naked in a quilt, and then carried on the back of a eunuch to the Emperor's room. In this manner she could introduce there no weapon concealed on her person. The custom is attested for the Ming and Ch'ing periods, but probably dates from much earlier times (cf. *Ch'ing-ch'ao-yeh-shih-ta-kuan*, Shanghai 1921, vol. I, page 112).

The women's quarters were, as before, a beehive of intrigue, every lady doing her utmost to attract the Emperor's attention. Two women succeeded in reaching the top by their beauty and personality, and their names are famous in Chinese history.

The first was the Lady Wu Chao, who while still a consort of the Emperor T'ai-tsung established sexual relations with his son, the Crown-prince, in the manner related on page 168 above. When she had become Kao-tsung's favourite, she killed her own child and then falsely accused the Empress and another favourite of the Emperor of having murdered it. The Emperor thereupon put those two women in prison, and in 655 raised Wu Chao to the rank of Empress. But when he still showed some interest in the two discarded women, Wu Chao had them dragged from the prison, had them severely whipped and then their hands and feet cut off, whereupon she had them drowned in a wine vat. Soon after the Emperor died, and the Empress Wu usurped all power, reigning the Empire with an iron hand. Her private life was marked by extreme lasciviousness. When the Emperor was still alive, she had persuaded him to place large mirrors all around the couch where she used to sport with him during the daytime. Once when the Emperor was sitting there alone, the famous general Liu Jên-kuei (601-685) came for an audience. He was horrified at seeing the Emperor sitting among the mirrors, and said: "There are no two suns in the sky, nor two rulers on the earth. Now your servant sees all around numerous Sons of Heaven. Is this not a sinister omen?" The Emperor then had the mirrors removed, but when after his death the Empress Wu started on her numerous amorous adventures she had them reinstalled. She must have been a woman of remarkable vitality, for when she was nearing her seventieth year she still sported there with Chang Ch'ang-tsung, a young man who was her favourite lover during eight years, and who

walked about in the palace with a rouged and powdered face. Yang Lien-fu made a satirical poem about the amours of the old Empress, saying:

In the clear spring, in the Hall of Mirrors,
 Many a secret game is played,
 The reflected images of the jade-like bodies,
 Carefully imitate their every movement.
 Mr. Six, drunk with victory,
 Smiles at the brilliant void,
 In a pair the Mandarin ducks sport,
 In the green waves.

"Mr. Six" referred to Chang Ch'ang-tsung, and the "brilliant void", ostensibly meaning the surface of the mirrors, in reality designates the Empress Wu. For the characters "brilliant" *ming* and "void" *k'ung* when superimposed on each other give her personal name Chao, written in the special manner favoured by the Empress.¹ She was all together a remarkable woman who, despite her lewdness and cruelty, on the whole governed the Empire well.

The second successful concubine was Yang Kuei-fei, the "Imperial Consort Yang". Her personal name was Yü-huan "Jade Ring", and she was a concubine of the son of the Emperor Ming-huang (712-755), famous as a patron of arts and letters. Yang Kuei-fei is described as a remarkable beauty of snow-white teint, but rather fat—as the fashion of that day demanded. Soon she was taken over by the aged Emperor himself, and rose high in his favour, being in 745 raised to the rank of Kuei-fei. The Emperor followed her every wish. Her three sisters were also entered into the harem as favourites, and a cousin was appointed minister of state. The Emperor loved to admire her naked body when she was bathing, and constructed for her the Hua-ch'ing Palace at the hot-spring resort in Shensi Province, where he went with her every year. But her career was abruptly cut short when the rebellion of An Lu-shan took place. When the rebel armies were drawing near to the capital in 756, the Emperor fled with his women. On the road the military escort demanded the head of Yang Kuei-fei, who was popularly considered as the cause of the decline in the Imperial fortunes. The Emperor had to give in, and she was killed together with her sisters. After An Lu-shan had been defeated by the loyal troops, the Emperor returned to the capital, but he could never forget Yang Kuei-fei and mourned for her till the end of his days. This tragedy has been vividly described in Po Chü-i's celebrated poem *Ch'ang-hên-ko* "The

¹ Cf. Hu Ying-lin, *op. cit.*, same chapter. For a similar Ming-quotation, cf. ECP folio page 169.

Song of Ever-lasting Woe", and the Ch'ing dramatist Hung Shêng (1645-1704) wrote a great play about it called *Ch'ang-shêng-tien* "The Palace of Eternal Youth", at present still very popular on the Chinese stage.¹

As regards the Imperial princesses, their marriages formed an integral part of the internal and foreign policies of the government. The Imperial sons-in-law (Chinese: *fu-ma* "extra-horse attached to a team") were chosen from among the scions of prominent families who were loyal supporters of the throne, or also among foreign rulers whom the Imperial government wished to appease or to bind to China. Not a few princesses were married to barbarian chieftains beyond China's borders—where as a rule they were not very happy. The classical example is that of the Princess Hsi-chün who ca. 100 B.C. was married to the chieftain of the Wu-sun tribe, and after her arrival there wrote a nostalgic poem that is famous in Chinese literature (cf. BD no. 2346). Rather a success was the marriage of the T'ang princess Wên-ch'êng with the Tibetan King Sron-btsan-sgam-po, in 641 A.D. This political marriage improved the strained Sino-Tibetan relations, and during her forty years' stay in Tibet the princess did much for the introduction of Chinese culture in that mountain-kingdom.

Also Imperial princes were sometimes married to foreign princesses for reasons of policy. Famous is the case of the Turkish Khan Mo-chüeh who wanted a T'ang prince to marry his daughter. The court considered this an impertinent request, but the Empress Wu mentioned above tried to reach a compromise by sending the Khan one of her own cousins, called Wu Yen-hsiu. But the Khan wanted only a prince of the Imperial T'ang lineage of the Li family, and kept the unfortunate Wu Yen-hsiu as prisoner.

In the T'ang dynasty writers of both serious and lighter literature freely discussed matters of sex. The various handbooks mentioned above circulated widely, and some new ones were written. The "Poetical Essay on the Supreme Joy" (*Ta-lo-fu*, see below) quotes next to such well-known older handbooks of sex as the *Tung-hsuan-tzû* and *Su-nü-ching*, also a "Classical Book of Sexual Intercourse" *Chiao-chieh-ching*, about which no further details are known.

In the Bibliographical section of the New T'ang Dynastic history (*Hsin-t'ang-shu*, ch. 59), most of the older handbooks of sex are listed, under the heading

¹ The *Ch'ang-hên-ko* was translated several times into English, i.e. by W. J. B. Fletcher in his "More Gems of Chinese Poetry", Shanghai 1933, pp. 122-130. See also the remarks in TPL vol. II, p. 120. The play *Ch'ang-shêng-tien* was translated into English by Yang Hsien-i and Gladys Yang under the title "The Palace of Eternal Youth", Peking 1955.

of books on medicine. Page 34a (of the Ch'ien-lung edition) mentions the *P'êng-tsu-yang-hsing-ching* in 1 ch., and the *Yang-shêng-yao-chi*, in 10 ch. by Chang Chan (cf. page 121 above). Page 36a lists the *Fang-chung-pi-shu*, in 1 ch., by Mr. Ko (cf. page 121, no. 4 above), and the *Yü-fang-pi-chüeh* in 10 ch., of Master Ch'ung-ho-tzû, compiled by Chang Ting. Ch'ung-ho-tzû is mentioned in the *I-hsin-fang* quotations. The Art of the Bedchamber was during the T'ang dynasty definitely classified as a branch of medical science.

Most handbooks of medicine of the T'ang period contain, therefore, a special section on the Art of the Bedchamber. At the same time, however, some writers used the sexual element in prose and poetry in a jocular sense in order to provoke amusement. This genre of T'ang letters has nothing to do with the serious discussions of the handbooks on sex, it constitutes the beginning of Chinese pornographic literature.

An extensive account of sexual matters as seen by a T'ang physician occurs in the medical work "Priceless Recipes" *Ch'ien-chün-yao-fang* (literally "Important Recipes worth one thousand goldpieces"). The pertinent section is entitled *Fang-nei-pu-i*, which might be freely translated as "Healthy Sex life".

The author was the famous Taoist physician Sun Szû-mo who lived from 601 till 682 A.D. Sun's original manuscript, divided into 30 chapters, was printed during the Sung dynasty in the year 1066, and reprinted in 1307 during the Yüan period. A new edition in 93 chapters appeared in the Ming dynasty, published in 1544 by the scholar-official Ch'iao Shih-ning, and was reprinted in 1604. The Ming edition was reprinted in Japan. This publishing history shows how popular the work was in medical circles in and outside China.

Below follows a survey of the contents of the section *Fang-nei-pu-i*, for the reader's convenience divided into 18 parts.

I. "Until a man reaches forty he is usually full of vigorous passion. But as soon as he has passed his fortieth year he will suddenly notice that his potency is decreasing. Just at that time of his decreasing potency the countless diseases will descend on him like a swarm of bees. If this situation is allowed to continue for long, he will finally be beyond cure. Now P'êng-tsu has said: 'Curing one human being by another, that is the real cure'. Thus when a man is forty it is time for him to acquire a thorough knowledge of the Art of the Bedchamber.

II. "Now the principle of the Art of the Bedchamber is very simple, yet few people can really practise it. The method is to copulate on one night with ten different women without emitting semen even a single time. This is the essence of the Art of the Bedchamber.

"A man must not engage in sexual intercourse merely to satisfy his

lust. He must strive to control his sexual desire so as to be able to nurture his vital essence. He must not force his body to sexual extravagance in order to enjoy carnal pleasure, giving free rein to his passion. On the contrary, a man must think of how the act will benefit his health and thus keep himself free from disease. This is the subtle secret of the Art of the Bedchamber."

Thereafter follows a section which points out the advantages of moderation in sexual intercourse during one's youth, and the importance of saving one's semen. Section IV describes the qualities of women suitable for the coitus, along the lines of the older handbooks. It says i.a. "One's women need not necessarily be beautiful and winsome; as long as they are young, have undeveloped breasts and are well covered with flesh they will prove advantageous". Section V points out the importance of preliminary sexual play, and the dangers of engaging in the act in too precipitous a manner. Section VI stresses frequent changing of the women one cohabitates with, and is translated below.

VI. "If a man continually has intercourse with one and the same woman her Yin essence will become weak and she will be of little advantage to the man. Yang is modeled after fire, Yin after water. Just as water can quench fire, so Yin can diminish Yang. If the contact lasts too long, the Yin essence (absorbed by the man) will grow stronger than his own Yang essence, whereby the latter will be harmed. Thus what the man loses through the sexual act will not be compensated by what he gains. If one can copulate with twelve women without once emitting semen, one will remain young and handsome for ever. If a man can copulate with 93 women and still control himself, he will attain immortality".

Sections VII and VIII give a further elaboration of this point. Section IX is of special interest since it discusses in detail the method for "making the semen return". It reads:

IX. "Everytime a man feels that he is about to emit semen during the sexual act, he should close his mouth and open his eyes wide, hold his breath and firmly control himself. He should move both hands up and down and hold his breath in his nose, constraining the lower part of his body so that he breathes with his abdomen. Straightening his spine he should quickly press the P'ing-i Point (explained below. Transl.) with index and middle finger of his left hand, then let out his breath, at the same time gnashing his teeth a thousand times. In this manner the semen will ascend and benefit the brain, thus lengthening one's span of life. If the semen is emitted freely, it will harm one's spirit".

"The *Classic of the Immortals* says: 'In order to live long without growing old, a man should first play with the woman. He should drink

the Jade Fluid—that is he should swallow her saliva. Thus the passion of both man and woman will be roused. Then the man should press (the P'ing-i Point) with the fingers of his left hand. He should imagine that in his Cinnabar Field (i.e. the lowest part of the abdomen, three inches below the navel; cf. the next paragraph. Transl.) there is a bright, red essence, yellow inside and red and white outside. Then he should imagine this essence as dividing itself into a sun and a moon that move about in his abdomen, and then ascend to the Ni-huan spot¹ in his brain, where the two halves are united again. Meanwhile, he should let his penis rest deep in the woman's vagina. This way he absorbs the woman's saliva above and the vaginal emissions below. As soon as he feels that the semen is moving and he is about to ejaculate, he should quickly withdraw his penis. However, only adepts of great wisdom can achieve this².

"The Cinnabar Field is located three inches below the navel, the Ni-huan spot is located inside the head, opposite the two eyes. One should imagine it as having the form of sun and moon, measuring three inches in diameter, and joined like one shape. This is what is called 'sun and moon in conjunction'. It is important to concentrate on this image when a man penetrates the vagina and withdraws it without ejaculating.

The above passage will be discussed in greater detail below. Continuing our survey of this text, we find that Section X sums up the preceding section in a few sentences. Section XI enumerates the benefits derived from controlling one's emissions, followed by a table resembling section XIX of the *I-hsm-fang* quotations. Sections XII and XIII then relate an incident that has become famous and which is often quoted in Chinese medical literature.

XII. "Man's passion naturally has its periods of great abundance. Therefore even superior men can not bear a protracted abstention from sexual intercourse. If a man abstains too long from emitting semen, he will develop boils and ulcers. But if a strong man of over sixty feels that his thoughts are still composed after not having copulated with a woman for one month or so, then he can afford not to engage in sexual intercourse any longer.

"Formerly, during the Chên-kuan era (627–649 A.D.), a peasant of over seventy came to consult me. He said: 'For several days my Yang essence has been most exuberant, so much so that I want to copulate with my wife even during daytime, and reach orgasm every time. Now I do not know whether this phenomenon is bad or good at my advanced age?' I answered: This is most unfortunate! You certainly know what happens with an oil lamp? Just before it is going to extinguish its wick will first burn low, then suddenly flare up. After this last flare it extinguishes. Now you have reached an advanced age. You should have abstained from sexual intercourse long ago. Now that your passion

¹ This technical term is discussed in Appendix I of the present volume.

suddenly flares up like this, is this not abnormal? I greatly fear for you and can only advise you to take good care of yourself. Six weeks later that man fell ill and died. This was the result of his not controlling his sexual relations. And there are many cases similar to his. I place on record only this one instance, as a warning to future generations."

XIII. "Therefore all men who know how to nurture their vital power will restrain their sexual urge as soon as they notice that it is particularly strong. A man should not indulge his passion freely, for then it will rob him of his vital essence. Everytime a man restrains himself it is as if new oil were added to a lamp about to extinguish. But if a man does not control himself and emits semen everytime he sleeps with a woman, it is as if he were taking away oil from a lamp already nearly burnt out. Should not a man restrain himself and thus avoid this calamity? Young men do not know this rule and those who know it do not practise it. Then, when they have reached middle age and when they have come to understand this principle, it is already too late; for by that time the ill is difficult to cure. Those who can spare themselves till they have grown older will prolong their remaining years and live to an advanced age. And those who have practised these principles while still young, will soon reach immortality."

XIV. "Some one asked me: 'Is it right for a man who is not yet sixty to abstain completely from sexual intercourse?' I answered: 'No. Man cannot do without woman and woman cannot do without man. If a man has no intercourse with women his mind will grow restive. If the mind is restive, the spirit will suffer. And if the spirit suffers, one's span of life will be shortened. Now if it were possible for a man to keep his mind always serene and entirely untroubled by thoughts of sex, then this would be of course excellent and such a man would live very long. But among ten thousand men there is perhaps one who can achieve this. As a rule forcible suppression of the sexual urge is difficult to attain and easy to lose again. It will cause a man to suffer from involuntary emissions and turgid urine, finally leading to his-being haunted by incubi. One emission of semen will then equal the loss caused by a hundred emissions of a man who leads a normal sex life'."

Section XV then enumerates dates and places where the exercise of the sexual act is taboo, similar to section XXIV of the *I-hsin-fang* quotations. Section XVI deals with eugenics, while section XVII gives a most elaborate table of dates favourable to the woman's conceiving. The treatise closes with section XVIII which mentions a number of other taboos. It is stated there i.a. that quicksilver should never come near a woman's vagina, for it may cause her to become sterile; and that a man should always avoid contact with the raw fat of deer which may make him impotent.

The above extracts show that Sun Szû-mo's observations on the whole tally with the contents of the older handbooks. However, there occur in his treatise three new elements.

Firstly, Sun attaches great importance to a man reaching the age of 40, which he considers as a turning point in man's sexual life and in his general physical condition. This idea I have not found in the older handbooks of sex.

Secondly, we saw above that the handbooks of sex advise to prevent emission of semen during the act by compressing the urethra (*I-hsin-fang* quotations, section XVIII). Sun, however, states that the same effect is obtained by pressing the *P'ing-i* Point. This is a technical term belonging to the ancient science of acupuncture and moxabustion. The handbooks of this therapy enumerate hundreds of *hsüeh* or "points" spread over the surface of the human body, where insertion of a thin needle or application of a burning piece of dried moxa will cure various afflictions of the organs and relieve pain. The *P'ing-i* point is located about one inch above the nipple of the right breast, and is also defined as "yin present inside yang" (*yang-chung yu yin*). Another "point" supposed to have a direct connection with man's sex reactions is the "Point of the Three Yang", *san-yang-hsüeh*, located along the leg 8 inches above the heel; moxabustion on that spot will diminish a man's potency.¹

Thirdly, Sun Szü-mo states that the process of "making the semen return" results in a union of the male and female principle—visualized as sun and moon—in the brain of the practitioner. This means that the sexual union, if performed in the right manner, will enable the man to achieve a kind of spiritual hermaphroditism and thus become an Immortal. This idea is not found in the older handbooks.

Another T'ang text gives an instructive description of the process of "making the semen return". It survives in the biography of a Taoist adept P'ei Hsüan-jên, written by a certain Têng Yün-tzû, and found in the biographical section of the Taoist collection *Yün-chi-ch'i-ch'ien* (SPTK edition, vol. 27, ch. 105).² Since this passage is written in clumsy style and bristles with Taoist technical terms, my translation is given here with due reserve. First it says that the

* Van Gulik does not indicate the source of this unusual explanation of *p'ing-i*. It is more commonly identified as a point at the perineum. Cf. Wile (1992: 57), cited in the Introduction. [PRG]

¹ For more details about acupuncture see G. Soulié de Morant, "L'acupuncture chinoise", Paris 1939-1941.

² This passage was discovered by the regretted French Sinologue Henri Maspero, who was a great authority on Taoism; he translated it in his article "Les procédés de nourrir le Principe Vital etc.", in *Journal Asiatique* (1937), Pages 386-387. Maspero there points out that although the text calls P'ei Hsüan-jên a man of the Han period, the biography was written in the T'ang dynasty. It was listed as a separate treatise in the bibliographical section of the Sung dynastic history, under the heading "Taoist books" (ch. 205, Ch'ien-lung ed. page 15a), and the passage translated here was overlooked when during the Ming dynasty the Taoist Canon was purged of references to sexual mysticism. The remark "This is not a heterodox method" seems to be a Ming interpolation. My translation deviates in some minor details from that of Maspero.



Figure 10

"The Stream of Life"
 Same source as Figure 2

ritual must be practised on a specified date, and after midnight, but not when the partners have been drinking wine or eaten rich food, for then it may harm instead of benefitting them. The text then proceeds:

After they have concentrated and purified their thoughts, then a man and a woman may practise together the art that leads to longevity. This method must be kept secret, it must be transmitted only to adepts. It allows a man and a woman together to activate their *ch'i*, and the man to nurture his semen (*ching*) and the woman her 'blood' (*hsüeh*). This is not a heterodox method (*wai-fa*), it concentrates on activating *yin* and strengthening *yang*. If this discipline is practised in the correct manner, then the *ch'i* fluid shall spread like clouds throughout the body, the seed will solidify and become harmonious, and soon all those who practise it, whether young or old, shall become (vigorous) like adolescents. The two partners should begin by meditating, detaching their mind from their own body and all worldly things. Then they grind their teeth seven times and recite the following spell: 'May the Golden Essence of the White Origin bring my Five Flowers to life; may the Yellow Lord of the Centre harmonize my soul and regulate my essence; may the Supreme Essence of the Great Emperor solidify my humours and fortify my spirit; may the Unsurpassed Supreme True One bind my six *ch'i*; may the Mysterious Old Man of the Supreme Essence make the spirit return and thus strengthen the brain. Make the two of us unite and blend so that the embryo is refined and the Treasure conserved'. Having pronounced this spell, the man holds his reins and locks his semen, so that the translated *ch'i* ascends along the spinal column till it reaches the *ni-huan* spot in the brain. This is called 'making it return to the Origin' (*huan-yüan*). The woman controls her emotions and nurtures her spirit so that she does not reach the climax (*lien-huo-pu-tung* 'the refined fire does not move'), she makes the *ch'i* of her two breasts descend into her reins, then again ascend from there till it has reached her *ni-huan* point. This is called: 'transforming the true' (*hua-chên*). The elixir (*tan*) thus formed (in the bodies of the two participants) if nurtured for a hundred days, will become transcendental (*ling*). And if this discipline is continued over a very long period, then it will become a natural habit, the method for living long and attaining Immortality.

This passage describes sexual congress conceived exclusively as a means for prolonging life; not aimed at obtaining offspring, but only at benefitting equally both participants. Neither the man nor the woman should reach orgasm, the act is a kind of alchemistic process, whereby the man's semen (*ching*) and the woman's ova (*hsüeh*) are roused, then translated into *ch'i* which rises along the dorsal column. It is one of the rare passages where this process is described as completely identical for both the man and the woman; as we have seen above, the texts stress as a rule the benefit accruing to the man, that of the woman being limited to the stirring and activating of her *yin*-essence.

Some medical works of the Ming dynasty give pictures which show the vital current in a man's body. This current is called *huang-ho*, the "Yellow Stream", and to make the semen ascend with this current is termed "to make the Yellow Stream flow in opposite direction" (*huang-ho-ni-liu*). One such picture as found in the Ming treatise *Hsing-ming-kuei-chih* (cf. page 38 above) is reproduced here on Figure 10. The current is represented as flowing normally from the top of the head down along the dorsal column to the genitals. In the "reversed technique" the semen rises from the genitals along the dorsal column up to the spot in the top of the head. The picture indicates the most important stages along this road. First the semen reaches the kidneys, indicated by a half-circle; according to the Chinese conception the kidneys play an important role in the sexual life of both man and woman. The entrance to the kidneys is called *yu-ch'üeh*, the "dark gate", the exit *mi-hu*, the "secret door". Opposite of the kidneys, on the front side of the body, the navel is marked; underneath are the *ming-mên*, the "gate of fate", and the *shêng-mên*, the "gate of life", i.e. prostate gland and seminal vesicles. The part of the dorsal column above the kidneys is called *wu-t'ang-kuan*, the "gate of the Five Halls". Farther up three nerves lead to the heart. Then the current passes through the *sui-hai* the "marrow sea", i.e. the hind part of the brains, up to the *ni-huan* spot, the zenith of the vital force, in the top of the head.

Other pictures in the same work depict the adept who has made the semen return as with a sun and a moon appearing on the top of his head.

Readers familiar with Sanskrit literature will notice the close resemblance of the technique of "making the semen return" as described by Sun Szü-mo, to the techniques of Tantric sexual mysticism, and more in particular that of the kuṇḍalinī-yoga. There certainly is a historical relation between the Chinese and Indian systems of sexual mysticism. However, tracing this connection here would lead us too far astray; those interested will find the pertaining material in Appendix I attached to the present publication.

Also the sexual handbooks circulating during the T'ang period were illustrated with pictures of the various positions. This is proved i.a. by the T'ang poetical essay *Ta-lo-fu* (see below) which mentions an illustrated edition of the *Su-nü-ching*. To the best of my knowledge none of these illustrations has been preserved. Japan, which so often supplies data lost or obsolete in China, in this case does not help us. The oldest erotic scroll picture preserved in Japan is the *Kanjō-no-maki* "Scroll of the Initiation", also known as *Koshū-bagaki-zōshi*. This is a series of sixteen pictures of the sexual act as performed in various positions by a courtier and a lady of the Hei-an period (781-1183 A.D.), accompanied by explanations in Japanese. The oldest copy is ascribed

to the 13th-century painter Sumiyoshi Kei-on, but it is said that this copy is based on an original of 900 A.D. The scroll is painted in pure Japanese style, including the abnormally enlarged sexual organs characteristic of all Japanese old and later erotic representations. Moreover, the accompanying text contains no references to the Chinese handbooks of sex. Thus, although during the Hei-an period the Japanese copied as a rule Chinese style, this particular subject constituted an exception.

However, next to the pictures belonging to the handbooks of sex, during the T'ang period already there also existed separate erotic scroll pictures not accompanied by an explanatory text. Ca. 1600 one picture of such a series, by the famous T'ang painter Chou Fang mentioned above, was obtained by the late-Ming painter Chang Ch'ou. Next to being a creative artist, this Chang Ch'ou was also a great collector of antique scrolls. He published in 1616 a descriptive catalogue of the paintings and specimens of calligraphy in his collection, entitled *Ch'ing-ho-shu-hua-fang*, still much used by present-day students of Chinese pictorial art. Because of the censorship Chang Ch'ou did not dare to include his description of Chou Fang's erotic picture in the *Ch'ing-ho-shu-hua-fang*, but the modern archaeologist Têng Chih-ch'êng found a copy of Chang Ch'ou's note on it which he printed in chapter 6 of his *Ku-tung-so-chi* "Trifling notes on Antiques", published in 1923.

Chang Ch'ou says that Chou Fang's picture was done in full colours on silk, and bore the title *Ch'un-hsiao-pi-hsi-t'u* "Picture of Secret Dalliance on a Spring Night"; Chang bought it from a Mr. Wang in Tai-yüan. Apparently it depicted an Emperor having sexual intercourse with one of his consorts, aided by two ladies-in-waiting, and with two other ladies standing by. Below follows Chang Ch'ou's description of the picture.

Painted by Chou Fang, styled Ching-yüan. Formerly in the collection of the 'Master of the Sea-gulls and Waves Pavilion' (i.e. the famous Yüan painter Chao Mêng-fu, 1254-1322 A.D., himself well known for his erotic pictures). Some say it represents the T'ang Empress Wu, others that it is Yang Kuei-fei; this point is difficult to decide. I have always heard that the women and girls depicted by Chou Fang had luscious flesh and solid bone structure, he did not paint them as slender and dainty. Now the main woman in this picture has clear, shining eyes, elegantly curved eyebrows, red lips and white teeth; well-developed ears and a long nose. She has mouches on chin and cheeks, cleverly placed. Her skin is soft and white, her fingers as if cut from jade. Her vulva is moist and flushed, her clitoris swollen.¹ Thus her passionate thoughts are well

¹ The text has *huo*- ("fire", rad. 86) *ch'i* (rad. 210), which means "firing-time" and "pearl", but here doubtless used by Chang as indicated in the translation, since he was unfamiliar with the older terms used in the handbooks of sex.

expressed. As to make-up and dress, the man wears a 'Far-Traveller's Cap' (a high cap of black gauze, fastened with a strap under the chin), and leather boots, his face looks like that of an Emperor or King. The woman has her hair done up in the 'Gazing at the Immortals' style (a high chignon), she wears silk socks and looks like an Imperial Consort. The ladies-in-waiting wear green-blue girdles, plaited skirts and square-topped shoes, all have the air of harem-ladies. All details of this painting are carefully executed, it is permeated by an antique elegance, such as could be achieved only in the T'ang period.

"I do not know at what time the term *pi-hsi* 'secret dalliance' originated. The historiographer says in his biography of Chou Jên that when he had become a favourite of the Emperor Ching (156-141 B.C.) he was admitted into the Imperial bedchamber, and was allowed to be present when the Emperor there 'sporting secretly' with his harem ladies.¹ Further, Tu Fu (the famous T'ang poet, 712-770 A.D.) has in one of his *kung-tz'ü* 'Seraglio Songs' the line: 'The pleasures enjoyed in the harem are secret, few come to know about them'. These quotations prove that this term *pi-hsi* dates from far back, it did not originate in recent centuries.

"I further find that similar pictures of former times as a rule show only one man and one woman engaged in sexual intercourse, and some of them do not show their private parts. But here Chou Fang has created a new pattern, of one man copulating with one woman, assisted by two maids. One of those pushes from the front side the woman's seat, the other stands behind them and pushes the man's back (while two other ladies stand by their side). That thus five women and one man are engaged in sexual dalliance together, this certainly is not to be seen on other old pictures".

The second and third paragraph show how effective post-T'ang Confucianist suppression of erotic data and Confucianist censorship had been. In ca. 1600 a learned connoisseur as Chang Ch'ou was completely ignorant of the old handbooks of sex, else he would not have marvelled at Chou Fang's representing on an erotic picture one man and several women. And apparently he also ignored the many other places in literature where the term *pi-hsi* is mentioned.

Until the T'ang dynasty, erotic literature in general had a didactic purpose. Neither the handbooks of sex, nor the treatises of the Taoist alchemists were written in order to afford amusement to the reader. During the T'ang dynasty, however, there was a demand for erotic literature that treated the subject of sex in a jocular way. Novelettes and short-stories of this kind enjoyed great popularity. The greater part of them, however, was either expurgated or destroyed during the ensuing centuries. The findings at Tun-huang give a general idea as to the variety of books on erotic subjects which existed at

¹ Chou Jên's biography in ch. 46 of the *Ch'ien-han-shu* states that his genitals had withered because of some disease. When he had thus become like a eunuch, the Emperor had taken him as a homosexual lover.

that time. Part of these manuscripts are in the Stein Collection in the British Museum and in Paris, part is in private Chinese and Japanese hands. One of the most important items, however, is available in an excellent facsimile reprint. This is the *Ta-lo-fu*, or "Poetical Essay on the Supreme Joy".

This text was discovered by P. Pelliot and is now in the Tun-huang Collection in Paris. The Chinese Vice-roy Tuan Fang (1861-1911) had it photographed and in 1913 the well-known antiquarian Lo Chên-yü (1866-1940) published in Peking a collotype reproduction, as part of the collection *Tun-huang-shih-shih-i-shu*. A scholar who signs himself with the penname Chi-ho san-jên "Hermit riding a Crane" added a colophon.

The text of this document is in bad condition. Apparently the T'ang scribe who wrote it out was a man of scant learning who did not understand the meaning of what he copied. Hence the text abounds in erroneous or mutilated characters, in repetitions and omissions. The last part is missing, but apparently this consisted only of one page or so.

The modern scholar Yeh Tê-hui, mentioned above in connection with the *I-hsin-fang*, made a careful study of this collotype edition, and in 1914 published an annotated version in his *Shuang-mei-ching-an ts'ung-shu*. He eliminated many errors but much work still remains to be done on this text. I published Yen's text, together with my own emendations, in volume II of ECP, divided for the reader's convenience into 15 sections. This is the text the translations given below refer to.

The complete title of this essay is "Poetical Essay on the Supreme Joy of the Sexual Union of Yin and Yang and Heaven and Earth". It bears the name of Po Hsing-chien (died 826 A.D.), younger brother of the famous T'ang poet Po Chü-i. I see no valid reason to doubt his authorship, as the writer of the colophon to the collotype edition does. Po Hsing-chien was not so famous as to tempt minor writers to borrow his name in order to enhance the value of their literary products.

The essay is written in excellent style and moreover supplies a wealth of highly interesting data relating to the manners, customs and slang of the T'ang period. Below follows a summary of its contents.

TA-LO-FU

I-II. Introductory remarks about the cosmic significance of the sexual act. The sexual union constitutes the supreme joy of man. High office and worldly honours only bring sorrow. Therefore the writer resolved to set forth the joys of sexual intercourse, leaving out no detail. "This essay describes man's life from infancy until death. Although there occur some obscene

passages, these were necessary in order to depict truly the delights of the sexual union. For of all the joys mankind has, there is none that surpasses this, hence I named this essay 'Poetical Essay of the Supreme Joy'. As to colloquial and dialect terms, these I used without any restraint in order to amuse the reader" (ECP, folio 75/10-13).

III. describes the conception, birth and reaching puberty of boy and girl. The foreskin opens immediately and the tip of the penis appears (Commentary: the boy); the lips of the vagina stretch and grow (Comm.: the girl). After seasons and years the black pubic hair comes forth (Comm.: the boy), after days and months the red fluid wells up (Comm.: the girl) (ECP, folio 76/3-4). It must be noted that "Commentary" refers to Po Hsing-chien's own comments, written in smaller characters directly below the passage they refer to.

Boy and girl having thus reached maturity, suitable mates are chosen and the marriage gifts exchanged.

IV. describes the wedding night, "on the evening of a bright spring day, under the red candles" (ECP folio 76/12). Then it says: "(The groom) takes out his Crimson Bird and loosens the bride's red trousers. He raises her ivory legs and strokes her jade buttocks. The woman grasps the Jade Stalk and plays with it in delight. The man sucks the woman's tongue and she becomes delirious. Then his saliva thoroughly moistens her vulva, which she gleefully offers to be ploughed. Then, before she is aware of it, the hymen is broken: with a vigorous thrust he puts in his penis. Soon "the boy" is open and drips semen abundantly. Afterwards they wipe their parts with the Six Girdles, and these are placed in a basket. From this moment onward they are a wedded pair. What is called the union of Yin and Yang from this time on will continue without interruption" (ECP folio 76/13-14, folio 77-/1-4).

V. contains a more detailed description of the sexual act. "On a moonlit night in a storied pavilion, or by the library window early in spring, the pair read together the Handbook of the Plain Girl (*Su-nü-ching*) and observe its illustrations of the various postures. Screens are placed in a circle round their couch, and the pillows laid out. The beautiful woman then takes off her gauze skirt, and sheds her embroidered trousers. Her brow is rounded like the calyx of a flower, her waist slender as a roll of silk. Her passion is stirring and what was hidden now reveals itself. His eyes cloud over as he looks at her lower body. First he feels her body, then caresses it from top to toe. Then, when her feet are raised and placed on his shoulders, he moves his bare penis toward her stomach.¹

¹ The text has *hsüan-chün* which could mean "opens the skirt". Since it was stated a few lines earlier that the woman had already shed her skirt, I suppose that *chün* here refers to the prepuce, especially since the word, as well as "skirt", also means "rims of the carapace of a tortoise."

They exchange kisses; they suck each other's tongue and his penis becomes erect. Quivering with passion, the Jade Stalk raises its head, the Golden Channel shakes and the lips open. Erect like the lonely peak of a mountain, the penis is like a rocky cliff aimed at the sky. Wet, like a shadowy valley, the woman's privates quickly move the Chicken's Tongue. Then the emissions of both organs flow plentifully. The woman lies on the bed and stretches her torso. The man, leaning on his hands, supports himself on the bed with his knees curved. The Jade Stalk rises and falls, comes and goes, moving to the left and to the right. Then the Yang tip enters by the proper way and meets the Lyre Strings. Moving up and down, the man's penis rubs against the Grain-Shaped Cave, probing and striking it, rubbing and pressing it. The man's hips do not stop moving and his penis penetrates as if wanting to be buried in this hot, deep, and wet hiding place. He thrusts inward until his penis is buried up to the root. He moves it now shallowly, now deeply, now lightly, now vigorously. He pushes his tongue into her mouth, and his penis penetrates her very heart. Their privates glisten with moisture and emit a sucking sound. The man turns his penis in different directions. Now he lets the penis become limp inside the woman, now he quickly withdraws the lubricated stalk. When it is wiped clean with a linen cloth, he inserts it again. His scrotum is thrown to and fro; his stalk fills the channel and seeks the abyss. Both the man and the woman groan with deep breaths. When she raises her quivering legs, a fragrance is smelled. Then he spreads his buttocks across the bed and uses the art of the bedroom. He alternates nine deep thrusts with single shallow ones. He does not stop doing this unless the ten signs of the woman's reactions appear. He reins in his passion by combining fast and slow thrusts. Looking down, he watches his penis as it enters and exits. Thereupon the woman changes countenance, her voice falters, her hairneedles fall down and her chignon is in disorder, the side tresses fall over her languid eyes, her comb gets loose and hangs over her shoulder like a moon-sickle. The man's eyes grow troubled, he exerts his arms and legs, his semen, penetrating the depths of her vagina, wets the pool in the Cinnabar Cave. Then the Jade Stalk is withdrawn, but the Golden Channel does not close. Their vital forces relax; their bodies and spirits rest. The penis is still wet and liquid clings to the scrotum. The woman's vulva drips as the liquid flows down her legs. Then the maids pick up the linen cloth, dip it into hot scented water, and clean the lovers' privates. They put on their trousers, then open the flowered boxes and put on new robes. She takes her precious mirror and puts on new make-up, she puts on her red shoes and steps down the silver-inlaid couch. With a tender smile she caresses

¹ The text has *ch'i-t'ai* "chicken's terrace". I think *t'ai* is a scribe's mistake for *shê* "tongue"; *ch'i-shê* corresponds with the expression *ch'u-chien* "chicken's tongue" mentioned on page 127 note 1 above. *T'ai* and *shê* are easily confused in cursive writing.

² I.e. the ten signs of the woman's reactions, described in section IX of the *I-hsin-fang* quotations.

her man with an unsteady hand. The joys of such moments shall not be forgotten till the end of their days" (ECP folio 77/5 till 79/1).

This passage supplies further proof that the handbooks of sex were meant as guide books for married couples, and shows also that during the T'ang dynasty illustrated manuscripts of the *Su-nü-ching* were in common use. It should be noted that the text contains a number of *verbatim* quotations from the *Tung-hsüan-tzû* and *Su-nü-ching*.

VI. describes the man's sexual intercourse with his concubines. This section ends with the lines: "Then the man makes his semen return and prevents emission. He absorbs the vagina's emissions and drinks her saliva. This is the 'completing of the nature' of those who study Tao, aimed at lengthening one's years and prolonging life" (ECP folio 79/12-13). The fact that this passage is inserted in the description of intercourse with concubines, and not in that describing the act with the wife, again proves that the coitus with the former was primarily meant to strengthen the man's potency, to ensure the conception of healthy children when he emitted semen while copulating with his wife.

VII. praises the delights of sexual intercourse during each of the four seasons. From the literary point of view this is the best part of the essay, it gives some touching descriptions of intimate scenes in the women's quarters.

VIII. is devoted to the sexual pleasures of the Emperor. It is of interest to note that it appears from this passage that the protocol defining the precedence in sharing the Imperial couch was not always strictly observed. It says: "Nine ordinary consorts every night, and the Empress two nights at full moon, this was the ancient rule, and the Ladies-in-waiting kept a careful record of this with their vermilion brushes. But at present the women in the seraglio of the Nan-mei Palace, three thousand in number, all together approach the Emperor displaying their charms, jealously vying with each other to obtain his favour. Is this not because the bodies of all those myriad women are reserved for this one man?" (ECP folio 82/1-4).

IX. depicts the sexual frustration of single men and those travelling far from home. Deprived of normal sexual intercourse they suffer from lack of appetite and insomnia, and their health declines.

X. relates how sometimes lewd men will secretly enter the women's quarters of a strange house to satisfy their lust. Folio 83/5 makes the following cynical remark regarding the women's reacting to the assault of such intruders: "Unmarried women will be speechless with fright and try to rise, married ones feign to be asleep and do not resist". This section ends with a description of illicit intercourse in the open air. "Or, when two lovers have an unexpected chance of meeting, they do not spread out a bedroll but unite at the foot of

a wall, on the border of the grass, or amidst flowering shrubs. Fearing lest people discover them they do not bother about the amenities, the girl just spreads her skirt out upon the grass or they lie down at the foot of a pillar. They are agitated and fearful, yet one such a clandestine and hurried union surpasses hundred engagements on the quiet couch at home" (ECP folio 83/8-10).

XI. is written in the spirit of Horace's line "Your love for a handmaiden should not shame you". It praises the joys of sexual intercourse with maid servants, citing several instances of famous people of olden times who became enamoured of their house maids.

XII. describes ugly women, with a wealth of historical examples.

XIII. deals with illicit intercourse in Buddhist monasteries. Deprived of normal sexual relations, young nuns will have affairs with Chinese and Indian monks. "Although these nuns do not dare to speak of it, in their hearts they are ready to surrender. Their lovers are noblemen or famous scholars who forsook the world and entered the priesthood, or tall foreign monks endowed with fat penises and closely shaved heads, who speak Chinese despite their barbarian appearance. When they are with those lovers the nuns forget the Law of the Buddha and play absent-mindedly with their rosaries" (ECP folio 84/12-14).

XIV. This section deals with homosexual relations among men, illustrated with well-known historical examples, mostly the Han Emperors mentioned in the beginning of Chapter III. The text is badly mutilated.

XV. Of this last section of the manuscript there remain only a few lines. Apparently it described sexual relations among peasants and country people.

Yeh Tê-hui's colophon draws attention to the fact that some terms of endearment used during the act by men and women quoted in this text continued to be used in later centuries. He cites i.a. the woman calling the man *ko-ko* "elder brother", and he her *chieh-chieh* "elder sister"; cf. ECP folio 86.

The meaning of the "six girdles", *liu-tai*, mentioned in section IV as being used to wipe off the private parts after the defloration, and then stored away in baskets, is not clear. If there is no scribe's error, the passage might refer to the custom, observed in many other parts of the world, of keeping the towel stained with the defloration blood, as proof that the bride was a virgin. The Yuan source *Cho-kêng-lu* has in ch. 28 a poem, in the metrical pattern *ju-mêng-ling*, that refers to this custom; it was offered to a man who on his wedding-night discovered that his bride was not a virgin any more.

Tonight a splendid wedding feast was held,
 But when I prepared to explore the fragrant flower,
 I found that spring was already past there.
 What use to inquire after much red or little red?
 Nothing to be seen, nothing to be seen!
 I return to you the piece of white silk.

At the end of his colophon Yeh Tê-hui mentions two spurious erotic texts, viz. the *Tsa-shih-pi-hsin* allegedly of the Han period, and the *K'ung-ho-chien-chi*, said to be a T'ang document. I agree with Yeh that these books are forgeries, hence they are not referred to in the present study. It is assumed that the former text was written by the Ming scholar Yang Shên (1488–1559), and the latter by the Ch'ing writer Yüan Mei (1716–1797).

A genuine erotic T'ang novelette is the *Yu-hsien-k'u* "Visiting the Fairy Cave", written by Chang Tsu (657–730) who had the reputation of being a man of elegant though frivolous taste. This book was long lost in China, but it was re-discovered in Japan by the Chinese bibliophile and geographer Yang Shou-ching (1839–1915). This is a fairly insipid love story, its merit lies chiefly in its polished style. It relates how a young scholar once strayed to a mountain abode where he found a beautiful and witty girl with whom he stayed overnight. About nine tenths of the text consist of the poems exchanged by the pair. The description of their sexual union near the end of the story is very brief, but the terms used suffice to show that the writer was familiar with the handbooks of sex.

Also genuine is the *Shên-nü-chuan* "Biographies of Goddesses", by the T'ang writer Sun Wei. The second story relates that the Han Emperor Wu (140–87 B.C.) used to make sacrifice to a female deity on the Po-liang Terrace. When his famous general Huo Ch'ü-ping fell ill, the Emperor advised him to go and pray to this deity for recovery. She appeared before the general in the shape of a beautiful girl and invited him to have sexual intercourse with her. He refused indignantly. Then his illness grew worse, and shortly afterwards he died. Thereupon the goddess revealed to the Emperor that the general had been failing in Yang essence. She had intended to supplement this with her Yin essence, and his refusal brought about his death. This story clearly reflects the influence of the handbooks of sex and their theories about Yin supplementing Yang during sexual intercourse.

The same idea is found in the short-story *Chih-hsü-shêng-ch'i-yü* "The Strange Encounter of Student Hsü", which is reprinted in HYTS, 11th series vol. 3. It tells about a handsome and strong young student called Hsü who when he went hunting always rested under a large tree. That tree proved to

be the home of a powerful mountain-spirit, and his daughter fell in love with Hsü and started visiting him in the night. They were married during a sumptuous ceremony in the magical palace of the deity. Later she had to leave Hsü, and the text says: "That girl had excelled in the art of nurturing life as taught by the Dark and the Plain Girl, and therefore (after their protracted sexual intercourse) Hsü's body had become twice as strong and handsome as before".

Finally I quote another story from the *Shên-nü-chuan* mentioned above, entitled "The Girls from the Temple of King K'ang". Only mildly erotic, and slightly sentimental, it is representative for a genre of erotic story that flourished during this period, and has remained popular ever since. It says that a young scholar called Liu Tzû-ch'ing had retired to a beautiful mountain spot for completing his literary studies. He had planted there all kinds of rare flowers. The story then goes on:

"Once, on a spring day of the year 426 A.D., when Liu was looking at his small garden, he suddenly noticed two beautiful coloured butterflies fluttering among the flowers. They were as large as swallows, and that day showed themselves several times. Liu marvelled at this. Then, one moonlit night when there was a cool breeze, Liu sat there singing poetry to himself, when suddenly there was a knock on the gate, and he heard to his astonishment girls laughing and talking. When he opened the door he saw two girls of about sixteen years old clad in coloured robes and of refined mien. They said to him: 'Once you marvelled at those things you saw fluttering among your flowers. We were influenced by your interest, hence have now come to visit you'. Liu bade them sit down and said: 'There is only this poor hovel, I am ashamed that I don't have wine to entertain you'. But one of the girls answered: 'Did you think we came here to drink wine? Now that the moon is already low in the sky, and night changing into dawn, I suppose you know what to think?' Liu said: 'This humble person only has this miserable hut, but I dare to hope for your affection'. Then the younger girl said with a smile to the other: 'Tonight I cede the honour to you, elder sister!' She rose and conducted her to his bedroom saying to him: 'Close the door and stay together, sharing coverlet and pillow. I wish that the joys of tomorrow night shall equal those of this!' When dawn broke the two girls left. The following night they came again, and this time the younger one stayed with Liu. He said to her: 'I know that you two are no ordinary human beings, but I wish you would tell me who you are'. The girl replied: 'Since you have now such beautiful wives, why make inquiries?' Thereafter the two sisters came once every ten days, and this continued for some years. Thereafter Liu had to return to his native village because of political trouble, and his relations with the two girls were broken off. On the Lu mountain was a temple of King K'ang, about twenty miles from

where Liu lived. Once he went to visit that temple, and saw there two statues of female deities moulded in clay. On the wall behind them were painted two attendant girls who resembled closely the two girls who used to visit him. He then suspected it had been they."

A number of love-stories of this period deal with fox-lore. The most common motif is that of a man falling in love with a beautiful young girl whom he meets under mysterious circumstances; later she turns out to be a vixen. Sometimes such a fox-woman benefits her lover, at other times she harms and even kills him. This motif has been popular in Chinese light literature ever since.

Fox-lore has a long history. In Chapter I it was observed that in the Chou period foxes were considered to possess a large amount of vital power because they live in holes and thus are near to the generative forces of the earth, and that hence the fox is credited with reaching a very high age. The *Shih-ching*, the Book of Odes, mentions foxes as sly animals (Ode no. 63 *Yu-hu*, and Ode no. 101 *Nan-shan*), and literature of the Han and Liu-ch'ao periods contains many data on the supernatural powers ascribed to foxes, especially their power to cause disease and all kinds of other disasters. There the fox also appears as taking delight in playing pranks, not unlike the "Reynard" of European folklore. The pertinent texts are found in J. J. M. de Groot's "The Religious System of China" (vol. V book II, Leyden 1907), page 576 sq.

It would seem that the special role of the fox as incubus dates from a later period and did not fully develop until the beginning of the T'ang dynasty. The *Hsüan-chung-chi*, a small work on supernatural phenomena, of uncertain authorship but apparently dating from the early T'ang period, has the following to say:

When a fox is fifty years old, it acquires the ability to change itself into a woman. At hundred it can assume the shape of a beautiful girl, or that of a sorcerer, or also that of an adult man who has sexual intercourse with women. At that age the fox knows what is happening at a distance of a thousand miles, it can derange the human mind and reduce a person to an imbecile. When the fox is a thousand years old, it is in communication with Heaven, and is then called Heavenly Fox, *t'ien-hu*.

More details about the fox's role in sexual life are found in the *Sou-shên-chi*, a work on the supernatural by the 4th-century author Kan Pao, but the authenticity of this work is doubtful; the text as we have it now does not seem to date from before the T'ang dynasty. Also the negative evidence provided by the fact that foxes as incubi are not mentioned in the *I-hsin-fang* quotations, would seem to point to the sexual aspects of fox-lore being not yet widely accepted prior to the T'ang dynasty. According to the T'ang source

Ch'ao-yeh-chien-tsai it was in the beginning of the T'ang period that originated a domestic fox-cult connected with fertility-rites. It was about the same time that the sexual aspect of fox-cult was introduced into Japan, where the fox came to be connected with Inari, the goddess of rice and fecundity.

However this may be, in the T'ang dynasty the belief in foxes acting as incubi and debauching men and women was widely spread. It has remained so till the present day, especially in North China.

TPL quotes some T'ang stories about foxes changing into human beings (vol. I, p. 112, vol. II, pp. 235, 256), especially into beautiful young women who bewitch men (vol. II, p. 367), and about fox-demons causing illness (vol. II, p. 225). Vixens were supposed to dwell by preference in an old grave where a young girl had been buried. They would enter the dead body and revive it in order to play tricks on man. The great T'ang poet Po Chü-i has written an interesting poem on this motif. According to him, however, a real woman can play even more havoc among men than a vixen posing as one. The poem runs:

When a fox-spirit has grown old, in a deserted grave,
It will transform itself into a woman of winning mien.
Its hair becomes a chignon, its snout a powdered face,
Its long tail changes into a trailing crimson robe.
Then, walking slowly, she'll haunt the lonely village roads
And towards nightfall, selecting a secluded place,
She'll sing and dance, and alternately sadly cry,
Not raising her curved eyebrows, her pretty face kept low.
When then she suddenly smiles, what joy does that convey!
There's hardly a man who is not then beguiled by her . . .
If even such false beauty leads man astray like this,
How dangerous then be genuine feminine charm!
Beauty both false and genuine beguiles man's heart alike,
But since the counterfeit appeals less than the true,
A fox posing as a woman will do a man but little harm,
Only for a day or so she can deceive his eyes.
But a woman bewitching like a fox, will do indeed great harm,
For days and months on end she'll keep man's heart entranced.

The reason why the fox was credited with special sexual associations must probably be sought for in a combination of two elements. First, the ancient belief in the abundant vital essence of the fox. And second, its proclivity to play pranks on man.

CHAPTER EIGHT

FIVE DYNASTIES AND SUNG PERIOD 908-1279 A.D.

Towards the end of the ninth century a large-scale rebellion of the armies in the south shook the T'ang dynasty and dealt the prestige of the Imperial court a blow that would in the end prove to have been fatal. Led by an upstart called Huang Ch'ao (BD no. 847) the rebels moved north, occupied the capital Ch'ang-an in 881, and the Emperor had to flee. In 884 the rebellion was put down, but the generals who had achieved this victory had grown so powerful and the Imperial prestige so weak that the Emperor's position was soon reduced to that of a mere puppet of those warlords. They established themselves as virtually independent military governors in their own territories, and in 907 one of them forced the last T'ang Emperor to abdicate. After three centuries the mighty T'ang dynasty had fallen.

There followed a period of strife between the warlords, worsened by inroads on Chinese territory by the barbarians from the north and west. By now, however, the cohesive force of Chinese culture had so strongly developed that this time of internal division could not last for long. After barely fifty years of disorder, the Empire was once more reunited, under the Sung dynasty.

Some of the short-lived dynasties and local courts that were liquidated by the Sung generals are famous because of their cultural achievements. Here must be mentioned the court of Mêng Ch'ang (BD no. 1514) who in 935 became the second ruler of the "Shu Dynasty" in Szuchuan, but in 965 had to surrender to the Sung forces. He had a consort, the Lady Hsü, who under her literary name *Hua-jui-fu-jên* "Flower-stamen Lady" became famous as an eminent poetess. She left a large collection of *kung-tz'ü* "Palace songs", one of which is translated here since it affords a charming glimpse of the amusements of the ladies in the seraglio.

The Palace ladies in front of the hall
Have all slender waists.
For the first time learning to ride on horseback,
They are greatly afraid,

But as soon as they manage to sit in the saddle,
 They want to gallop away.
 How many times they have to let the reins go
 And clasp the pommel in their arms!

(*Ch'üan-t'ang-shih*, part 11, ch. 10, page 6a)

And the following, expressing her own mood:

On a bright morning
 The mist drifts away from the flowers,
 And the crisp morning air,
 Invades the jade water reservoir.¹
 Then I unfold my writing paper,
 Five-coloured and sprinkled with gold,
 And sitting by the ornamental window,
 Practise cursive calligraphy.

(*Ibid.*, page 8a)

Further, Li Yü (937-978), the second ruler of the Southern T'ang dynasty, was one of the greatest Chinese love-poets. It was he who fully realized the rich possibilities of the form of poetical expression known as *tz'ü*. Classical Chinese poetry is written as a rule in the literary language, and in lines of equal length, each usually consisting of five or seven words. The *tz'ü* verses, words added to melodies, and bound only by the tones and metre of the music, may have lines of greatly varying length, and the use of colloquial expressions is allowed. Thus they lent themselves better to the expression of emotional nuances.

Li Yü was a sensitive artist, more interested in music, dancing and beautiful women than in political and military affairs. The Sung generals made short shrift of him and his ephemeral dynasty, and he died as a captive of the first Sung Emperor. But although he failed as a politician, he gained a lasting victory as a poet: all through the Sung and later dynasties Chinese poets have acknowledged him as one of the great masters, and to-day still the poetic styles inaugurated by him are eagerly followed by all poets who specialize in themes of love and romance.

Here are translated four of his love-poems, which may serve to counter-balance the descriptions of stark carnal love translated in the preceding chapter. The first three poems express Li Yü's own feelings, in the fourth

¹ I.e., the small water-container used for moistening the slab where the ink is rubbed prior to writing.

he interprets those of one of his lady-loves. Unfortunately a translation can only reproduce the content of these poems, it is impossible to render in another language the unexpected pauses and sudden accelerations of the rhythm that give Li Yü's verse its breathless, haunting quality.

Metre: *Huan-ch'i-sha*

The red rays of the setting sun
Shine in the room,
As the golden brazier is lighted,
Its coals are added to the lion-shaped incense-burner¹
The red brocade carpet wrinkles
In the wake of her dancing feet.

And though the lovely one steps lightly,
Her golden hairneedles dropped.
Flushed with the wine I pick up a flower
And inhale its scent—
From afar I hear the flutes and drums,
In the other Palace.

Metre: *P'u-sa-man*.

The copper tongues in the mouth-organ
Resound in the cool bamboo tubes,²
As slowly she plays new tunes,
With her jade-like fingers.
Her eyes look at me invitingly—
As autumn waves, swiftly changing.

¹ For details about the lion-shaped incense burner cf. page 107 above. A. Hoffmann translates *hsiang-shou* wrongly as "pieces of incense in the shape of animals" (cf. the rendering of this poem in his "Die Lieder des Li Yü", Cologne 1950, page 31). For passages in Chinese literature showing the correct meaning cf. *P'ei-wên-yün-fu* s.v. *hsiang-shou*.

² The *shêng* or Chinese mouth-organ consists of a small soundbox shaped like a halved calabash and from which rise a number of thin bamboo tubes that function as our organ-pipes. Inside the pipes are copper tongues that start to vibrate when the air enters, and when the player closes the hole in the pipe. The player holds the instrument with both hands up to his mouth, letting the sound box rest in his palms so that his fingers are free to close the holes.

The *shêng* is one of the most attractive Chinese musical instruments but unfortunately it lost its popularity during the Sung period so that till recent years there were few musicians who could still play it. It has always remained popular in Japan, however, and in China its study is now being taken up again.

We knew the "rain" and the "clouds"
 In the intimacy of the curtained chamber,
 Where our deep passion united us.
 Now, after the feast—how empty is the room!
 There is nothing left but to lose myself
 In dreams of spring.

Metre: *Hsi-ch'ien-ying*

The moon of dawn is waning
 The overnight mists dissolve.
 Speechless I seek the rest of my pillow
 Thinking with fond longing
 Of our fragrant dream.
 I faintly hear the sparse cries
 Of the geese flying in the sky.

The singing orioles have scattered,
 Fallen the withered flowers.
 I am alone in the court
 Of the painted halls.
 Do not sweep away the red petals,
 Leave them scattered as they are—
 To wait for the return
 Of the fair dancer's feet".

Metre: *P'u-sa-man*

The flowers are bright
 In the dim moonlight,
 A haze envelops everything,
 So tonight I can steal to my lover.
 I tread the fragrant steps
 In my stockinged feet,
 Carrying in my hands
 My gold-embroidered shoes.

We meet south of the painted hall
 One brief moment, shivering with fear.
 Since I risk so much in coming here,
 You must give unstintingly all your love.

Li Yü is important for our present subject not only as one of the great love-poets, but also for another reason. It was he who according to tradition introduced the custom of women binding their feet, a custom which throughout later ages played a preponderant role in the sexual life of the Chinese.

Sung and Yüan sources are cautious in expressing an opinion on the history of foot-binding—in their time already a widely-spread and well-established custom. Sung and Yüan writers state that they did not find direct references to bound feet in T'ang and pre-T'ang literature, and that they failed to detect ladies with bound feet on pictures of those times. They quote the story of Li Yü and one of his favourite consorts called Yao-niang as explaining the origin of the custom. It is said that Li Yü had once constructed for her a large lotus-flower of over six feet high, made her compress her feet with bands of cloth so that their pointed tips looked like the points of a moon sickle, and then had her execute his favourite dances on that lotus flower. Hence Yao-niang is traditionally represented in the act of winding the bands round her feet. As shown in figure 11, she applies the bandage to her right foot, resting on her left knee. It is said that Yao-niang's bandaged feet excited such a general admiration that all other ladies started to imitate her.

Although one may doubt whether it was indeed Yao-niang's bound feet that started the fashion, all literary and archeological evidence points to the custom having begun in or about her time, that is in the interval of ca. fifty years that elapsed between the T'ang and Sung dynasties. It persisted all through subsequent centuries, and became obsolete only in recent years. At present one still sees in China occasionally elder women with bound feet, but never younger women and girls, so that it is to be expected that a few years hence none will be left.

Whereas Sung and Yüan writers took the correct historical view, during the Ming dynasty the tendency to ascribe all existing customs to high antiquity influenced also Ming opinion on the history of foot-binding. Ming writers gave forced explanations to old literary references to women's feet, stockings and shoes, and thereby tried to prove that foot-binding existed already in the Chou and Han periods. These theories have no foundation in fact and must be disregarded.¹

While thus the history of this custom presents no particular problems, it is difficult to determine the reason why women's feet have played such a very special role in Chinese sexual life ever since they were bound.

Ever since the Sung dynasty, excessively small, pointed feet have formed

¹ A comprehensive survey of Chinese literary data on footbinding is given by the Ch'ing scholar Yü Ch'eng-hsieh (1775–1840) in his collection of notes *Kuei-szu-lei-kao*, blockprint of 1879, ch. 13 page 11 sq.

宵娘



百長新永

圖傳十九

纏足昭蟾影

Figure 11

Yao-niang putting on the bands of her bound feet

Same source as Figure 4

an indispensable item in the list of attributes of a beautiful woman, and gradually there developed around them a special foot- and shoe-lore. Women's small feet came to be considered as the most intimate part of her body, the very symbol of femininity, and the most powerful centre of sex-appeal. Sung and later erotic representations depict women stark naked and with the vulva shown in all detail; but I have never seen or read about a picture that showed a woman's uncovered bound feet. This part of the female body is strictly taboo. The farthest the artists dare go is to depict a woman beginning to fasten or loosen the bandages round her feet. The taboo also extended to bare unbound women's feet, the only exception being pictures of female deities such as Kuan-yin, or occasionally of a maid servant.

Women's feet being the centre of her sex-appeal, a man's touching those became the traditional preliminary to sexual intercourse. Nearly every Ming and later erotic novel describes the first advances in the same, uniform manner. When the prospective lover has succeeded in arranging a tête-à-tête with his lady, he never makes any attempt at physical contact for gauging her feelings, he is not even supposed to touch her sleeve—although there is no objection to suggestive speech. If he finds she reacts favourably to his verbal advances, he will let one of his chopsticks or a handkerchief drop to the floor, and when stooping to retrieve it, he will touch the lady's feet. This is the final test. If she does not get angry, the suit has been gained, and he can immediately proceed without restraint to all physical contact, clasping her in his arms, kissing her etc. While a man's touching a woman's breasts or buttocks may be explained and accepted as an accidental mistake, no apology will be accepted for his touching her feet, and such a mistake invariably gives rise to the most serious complications.

A modern Chinese writer has compiled a book in five stout volumes on the lore that grew up around women's bound feet and small shoes.¹ This lore includes wine-games with ladies' shoes, names and types of ladies' shoes, long lists of literary expressions for bound feet, etc. etc. He reproduces also the views of a galaxy of old and modern authors on the subject, but nowhere

¹ Yao Ling-hsi, *Ts'ai-fei-lu*, vls. I-III published Tientsin 1936, vol. IV *ibid.* 1938, and vol. V (hsü-pien) *ibid.* 1941. An exhaustive collection of old and modern material, illustrated with numerous photographs and drawings. Also details about the anti-foot-binding movements in the later years of the Ch'ing dynasty and the early part of the Republic, and about the manufacture, ornamentation and types of ladies' shoes. Vol. III reproduces an erotic picture by the Ming artist Ch'iu Ying, a bedroom scene where the man is teasing the woman by refusing to hand her her shoes while she, sitting on the bed, is fastening the bandages of her bound feet.

Both persons are fully dressed, the erotic element lies in the suggestive character of the scene.

does he give a satisfactory explanation of the connection between bound feet and sex, or of the strict taboo regarding bound feet.

Standards of decency are of course subject to convention, and convention is influenced by the vagaries of fashion. This explains i.a. why the T'ang Chinese did not object to women showing their bare neck and bosom, while the Sung and later Chinese considered such exposure as indecent and introduced the high-collared jacket. But mere change in fashion does not suffice to explain the foot- and shoe-taboo.

Some writers have tried to establish a connection between bound feet and the woman's private parts by asserting that the gait imposed by the bound feet caused a special development of the *mons veneris* and vaginal reflexes, but this theory has been definitely rejected by medical experts. Others proposed more general theories, averring that Confucianists encouraged the custom because it helped to restrict women's movements and kept them within the house, and that thus bound feet came to stand as a symbol of womanly modesty. Also this theory is far-fetched and wholly unsatisfactory.

As far as I can see, the problem can only be solved by approaching it from a psycho-analytical angle, perhaps along the lines of shoe-fetichism. This task I leave to experts in sexology.

The technique of foot-binding lies also outside the scope of the present study; the reader may be referred to the pertaining descriptions by medical observers.¹ Here it may suffice to say that the feet of a girl when still young are compressed by winding round them tight bands, so that the big toe is bent back, and the four others folded against the sole of the foot. The pressure is gradually

¹ For an early description see the article "Small feet of the Chinese females: remarks on the origin of the custom of compressing the feet; the extent and effects of the practice; with an anatomical description of a small foot", in *The Chinese Repository*, vol. III (no. 12 of April) Canton 1835. Also H. Virchow, "Das Skelett eines verkrüppelten Chinesinnen Fusses", in *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, vol. XXXV, 1903, pp. 266-316. Reviewed by E. Chavannes in *Young Pao*, 2nd series vol. IV (1903), page 419. Chavannes quotes the editor of the Chinese archeological work *Chin-shih-so* as saying that women with bound feet occur on bronze mirrors and reliefs from before Li Yu's time, but Chavannes admits that the representations referred to are not convincing; they only show that women have smaller feet than men and do not indicate the hoof-like shape of real bound feet. Chavannes' quotation of Montaigne on the lewdness of crippled women at the end of his review is irrelevant.

Various medical opinions are summed up in Ploss & Bartels, "Das Weib in der Natur und Völkerkunde", ed. by von Reitzenstein, Berlin 1927, vol. I, pp. 290-300.

Further J. J. Matignon, "La Chine Hermétique, superstition, crime et misère", Paris 1936 (first published in 1902, under the title "Superstition, Crime et Misère en Chine"), chapter "A propos d'un pied de chinoise". The author was many years a practising physician in Peking. Although written in an unfortunate cynical vein, this book is based on actual observations and contains useful material on Chinese sexual life ca. 1900. There may be more recent literature in professional medical publications.

increased, till the dorsum pedis is bent in a sharp angle. The X-ray picture traced on Figure 12 shows the resulting deformity. In this way the bulk of the foot was transferred to the ankle, and the small part left below could be encased into a diminutive shoe. The swollen ankle was concealed by leggings, the style of which underwent considerable changes in the course of the centuries. Figure 13 gives a general idea of these articles of dress which played such an important role in Chinese erotic art and literature.

A. shows the leggings and shoes, kept on as the only dress articles by an otherwise naked woman, drawn after a picture in the erotic album *Shêng-p'êng-lai* of ca. 1550 A.D. (cf. the reproduction in ECP, Plate X). The leggings are of plain silk provided with an embroidered lower border that would show from under the rim of the robe when the woman was dressed, falling over the shoes. The leggings were fastened above the calf with a band, the ends of which trailed down to the floor. As appears from the Ming book-illustration reproduced on Figure 18, women tucked the ends of their trouser-legs inside those leggings. B. gives another style of leggings, drawn after pictures in albums dating from 1600–1650, such as the *Hua-ying-chün-chên* and *Chiang-nan-hsiao-hsia* (cf. the reproductions in ECP). These leggings consisted apparently of stiffened cloth, and were fastened by tying a band round the leg slightly above the



Figure 12

Sketch after an X-ray picture of a bound foot

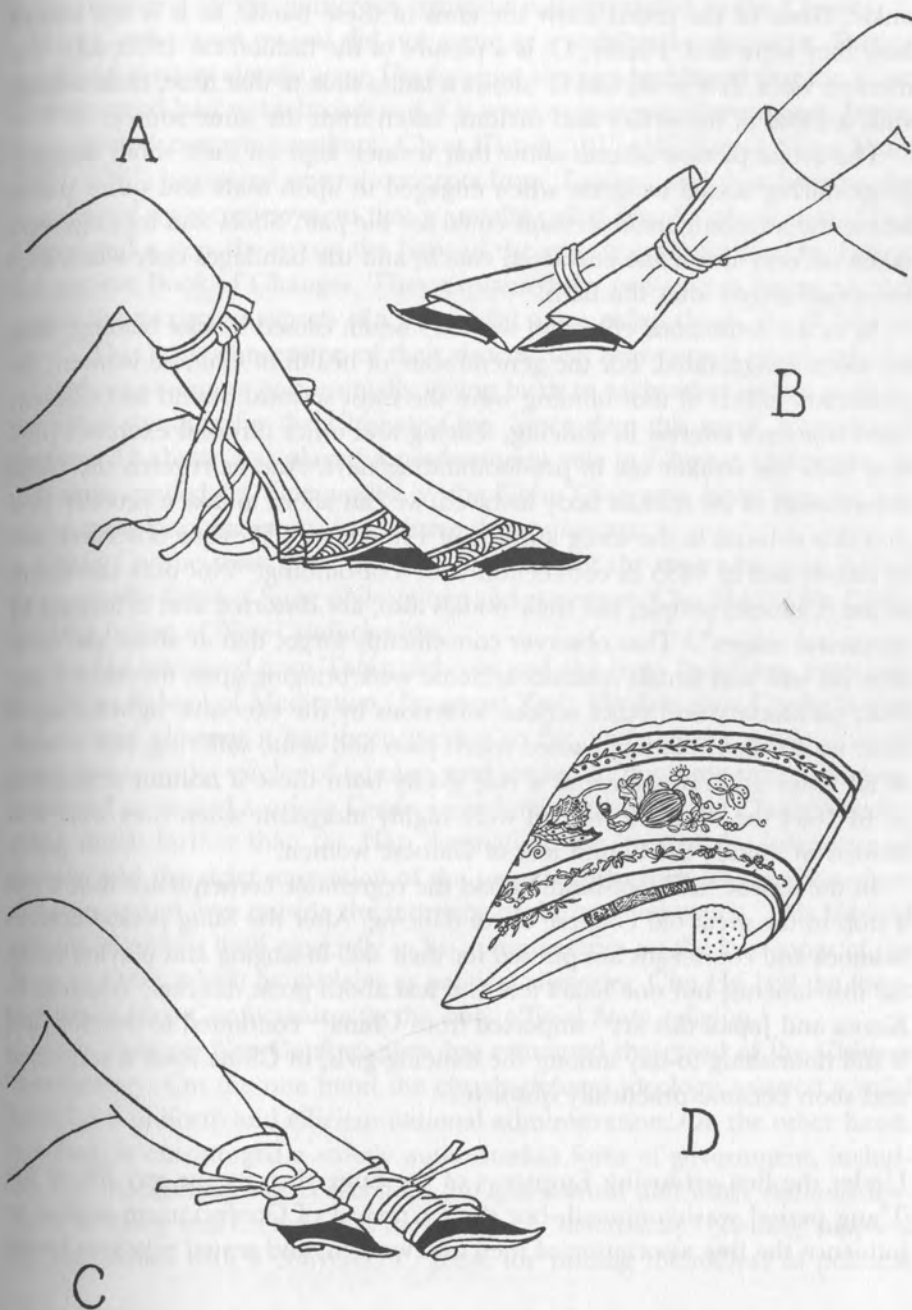


Figure 13

Various styles of women's leggings, and a small shoe for a bound foot

ankle. None of the prints show the ends of these bands, so it is not known how they were tied. Finally, C. is a picture of the fashion ca. 1900, after the modern work *Ts'ai-fei-lu*, and D. shows a ladies shoe of that time, embroidered with a motif of butterflies and melons, taken from the same source.

The erotic picture albums show that women kept on their shoes and leggings during sexual congress when engaged in upon mats and other places where the attending maid servants could see the pair. Shoes and leggings were taken off only inside the curtained couch, and the bandages only when they were exchanged after the bath.

As to the detrimental effects on women's health caused by foot binding, these are often exaggerated. For the general state of health of Chinese women, the secondary effects of foot-binding were the most serious: bound feet discouraged women's interest in dancing, fencing and other physical exercises popular with the weaker sex in pre-footbinding days. And as regards the wilful deformation of the human body involved, we can afford to take a broader view than that evinced in the smug attitude of 19th-century Western observers, one of whom said in 1835 in connection with foot-binding: "Not only the minds of the (Chinese) people, but their bodies also, are distorted and deformed by unnatural usages".¹ That observer conveniently forgot that at about the same time his wife and female relatives at home were bringing upon themselves cardiac, pulmonary and other serious afflictions by the excessive tight-lacing of their waists. Foot-binding caused much pain and acute suffering, but women of all times and races have as a rule gladly born those if fashion demanded it. In 1664 the Manchu women were highly indignant when they were forbidden to imitate the bound feet of Chinese women.

In the artistic field foot-binding had the regrettable consequence that it put a stop to the great old Chinese art of dancing. After the Sung period famous beauties and courtezans are praised for their skill in singing and playing musical instruments, but one hears less and less about great dancers. Whereas in Korea and Japan this art—imported from China—continued to develop and is still flourishing to-day among the dancing-girls, in China itself it stagnated and soon became practically obsolete.

Under the first art-loving Emperors of the Sung dynasty the gay life of the T'ang period was continued, but then a revival of Confucianism started to influence the free association of men and women, and sexual relations began

¹ Quoted from the first page of the article in *The Chinese Repository*, mentioned in the preceding note.

to be restricted by the numerous stringent rules recorded in the Classics.

The Confucianist revival did not come as a sudden development. During the T'ang dynasty already some Confucianist scholars had found that the scope of their creed had to be broadened if it were to gain popular support. In the Sung period two philosophers, Chou Tun-i (1017-1073) and Shao Yung (1011-1077) borrowed several concepts from Taoism, and thus became the founders of a syncretic system that is usually called Neo-Confucianism. They formulated a new theory on the basis of the system embodied in the *I-ching*, the ancient Book of Changes. They explained the two cosmic forces *yin* and *yang* as the two active aspects of a primordial unity, called *t'ai-chi*, the "Ultimate One". This basic conception of their system they represented graphically by *yin* and *yang* merging and mutually giving birth to each other within a circle, the latter standing for the Ultimate One. Since then this motif, reproduced on page 41 above, has played a predominant role in Chinese philosophy as well as in applied art. Surrounded by the Eight Trigrams, it has become one of the most popular motifs in Chinese decorative art.

Other Confucianists elaborated this system, but the man who gave it final form was the famous Sung philosopher and statesman Chu Hsi (1130-1200), the real father of Neo-Confucianism.

Chu Hsi borrowed from Taoist alchemy and also from Buddhism, especially the Ch'an School of Meditation (Japanese: Zen). He thus gave Confucianism the esoteric element it had been lacking so far, and thereby made it more attractive to wider circles of scholars and artists. At the same time, however, he placed on record a strictly Confucianist interpretation of the Classical books, going much farther than the Han dogmatists. He stressed the inferiority of women and the strict separation of the sexes, and forbade all manifestations of heterosexual love outside the intimacy of the wedded couch. This bigoted attitude manifests itself especially in his commentaries on the love-songs of the Book of Odes, which he explains as political allegories. Chu Hsi laid the foundations of Neo-Confucianism as the only official State religion.¹

From then on Neo-Confucianism has remained the creed of the Chinese bureaucracy. On the one hand the clearly-defined ideology ensured a solid basis for a uniform and efficient national administration. On the other hand, however, it encouraged a strictly authoritarian form of government, including the establishment of censorship, thought-control and other dubious features. In Ming and Ch'ing times the charge of "heterodoxy" (*pu-ching*) supplied the authorities with a convenient excuse for ridding themselves of political

¹ For an excellent description of Neo-Confucianism see Needham, SCC vol. II, page 435 sq.

opponents and other people whose thoughts were considered dangerous to the security of the state.

The Sung rulers themselves did not practise the principles of the school they officially supported; personally they were, as the Han Emperors before them, much more interested in Taoism. They sought for the Elixir of Immortality and devoted a great deal of their time to the pleasures of the seraglio. Palace inventories of that time mention also *pi-hsi-t'u*, "Pictures of Secret Dalliance", which suggest their engaging in Taoist sexual disciplines. Since then erotic pictures in general are often called *ch'un-kung-hua* "pictures of (sexual dalliance in) the Spring Palace", also abbreviated to *ch'un-hua* "Spring Pictures".

The teachings of the handbooks of sex were still practised in and without the Palace, but now some writers started to raise a warning voice against those disciplines. The Sung writer Wang Mao (1151-1213) devotes a long discussion to the sexual habits of the ruler and the gentry, found in the first section of chapter 29 of his *Yeh-k'o-ts'ung-shu*. After describing the enormous number of women the Emperors used to have sexual intercourse with, he then goes on:

The princes and noblemen of to-day keep large numbers of consorts and concubines, they use them as a kind of medicine, in order to obtain the 'true essence' and in order to strengthen their vital power. But this will not prove advantageous to them, on the contrary it will soon ruin their health. And even a superior man who understood (the Confucianist) Reason like (the famous T'ang Confucianist) Han Yü could not avoid succumbing to those teachings. So difficult it is to control one's carnal desires. Thus countless members of the gentry harm their body and lose their life through 'those with the powdered faces and painted eyebrows', but they still persist in these practices and will not see reason.

The prolific Sung writer Tsêng Tsao (literary name Chih-yu-chü-shih, flourished ca. 1150 A.D.) included in his work *Tao-shu*¹ a chapter entitled *Jung-ch'êng-pien* ("Section on the theories of Master Jung-ch'êng"; cf. p. 70 no. 1 above), where also he inveighs against the sexual disciplines of the Taoist alchemists. His criticism is directed especially against the *Ju-yao-ching* "Classic of making the Medicine enter", written by his contemporary Ts'ui Hsi-fan. A thoroughly expurgated text of the *Ju-yao-ching* is found in the

¹ The first seven chapters of the *Tao-shu* were reprinted in the *Ts'ung-shu-chi-ch'êng* of the Commercial Press, as a separate work entitled *Chih-yu-tzu*, by "an unknown author". Apparently these seven chapters circulated as such during the Ming period (see the preface by Yao Ju-hsün, dated 1566). It is curious that the modern editors of the *Ts'ung-shu-chi-ch'êng* failed to identify this text as part of the *Tao-shu*.

Taoist Canon as it was printed between 1444–1447; this text was reprinted in the *Tao-tsang-chi-yao* "Important Extracts from the Taoist Canon", accompanied by notes written by the Taoist Wang Tao-yüan, the famous writer Li P'an-lung (1514–1570), and by the Ming scholar P'êng Hao-ku. This badly mutilated text consists of only 80 lines of three characters each, and which are so vague as to admit of almost any explanation. Tsêng Tsao, however, knew the complete original. From his quotations—no trace of which is found in the expurgated text—it is evident that the *Ju-yao-ching* was a handbook of Taoist sexual alchemy. Tsêng Tsao says:

I obtained the book *Ju-yao-ching* of Master Ts'ui, which explains the 'battle' of sexual intercourse with women . . . 'Red Snow' is there called the true essence of (the woman's) blood, it is this which creates the embryo in the womb. It resides in the uterus as *yang*-essence, when it comes forth it is blood. When the tortoise enters (i.e. when the penis is inserted into the vagina), one should wait while the essence is produced as the woman comes to orgasm. Then the tortoise's head is turned; restraining its semen, it drinks the woman's essence and drains her of it. When the *ch'i* is fixed and the spirit in harmony, then the *ch'i* (obtained from the woman) will enter the 'gate' (of the dorsal column) and is drawn as if by a windlass up against the Yellow Stream, till it has ascended to the 'peak' (*k'un-lun*, that is the *ni-huan* spot in the top of the head. Transl.), and manifests itself in the 'Golden Gate' (?). It then enters the Cinnabar Field, where it develops into the Elixir. When I read this I burst out in vilification and said: Did Master Ts'ui really say those things? I have heard that the Sages of Old did not practise these disciplines. Formerly when Chang Tao-ling taught the Tao of the Yellow and Red (*huang-ch'i*) and of the mass-disciplines of 'uniting the *ch'i*' during sexual intercourse (*hun-ch'i*), these were only one way of bringing the embryo to development, it was not something that concerned the true Taoist adepts. And after Chang Tao-ling had perished, these practices disappeared. The Adept Ch'ing-ling said: I have seen people die through these practices, I never have seen someone obtaining life through them'.

From this text it appears that, during the Sung period, the teachings that in the third century inspired the Yellow Turbans were still continued in some Taoist circles. The possible significance of the term "yellow and red", *huang-ch'i*, which is not mentioned in the older texts on the disciplines of the Yellow Turbans, shall be discussed in Appendix I of the present volume.

Attention is drawn to the fact that the text refers to the male organ as *kuei*, "tortoise" or "turtle", obviously because its long neck and pointed head

resemble that member. The turtle had also other sexual associations, but for a long time those did not detract from the animal's position as venerated symbol of vital force and longevity. It was only towards the Ming dynasty that its sexual connotations were thought so offensive that the turtle was banished from fine and applied art, and that the word *kuei* became taboo in polite society. It is not without interest to trace the history of this degradation of a symbol, for it throws a sidelight on the development of Confucianist puritanism.

As we saw in Chapter I, the carapace of the tortoise was used in divination as early as the Yin dynasty, the animal was regarded as a receptacle of vital force and looked upon as holy. In Chapter II it was mentioned as an old symbol of the Northern quarter, often represented in fine and applied art. The image of a tortoise sculpted in stone was the traditional socle of memorial tablets, seals were often given a top carved into the figure of a tortoise, and as a symbol of longevity it was regularly used in the decoration of vases, boxes and other art objects. Moreover, the word *kuei* was of frequent occurrence in personal names; I mention the famous T'ang poet and tea-connoisseur Lu *Kuei-mêng* (died 881 A.D.), the Sung writer P'êng *Kuei-ling* (1142-1206), etc. The term *kuei-ling* "the high age of the tortoise" was also used in congratulatory inscriptions offered to a person on his birthday, and such inscriptions were freely displayed on the walls during festive occasions. However, circa 1300 A.D. this animal was falling from its high estate.

The early-Ch'ing writer Wang Shih-chên (1634-1711) recognizes this fact, but refuses to acknowledge the reason for it. He says in ch. 22 of his *Ch'ih-pei-ou-t'an*, under the heading *ming-kuei* "taking *kuei* as personal name":

The unicorn, the phoenix, the tortoise and the dragon are called 'transcendental' (*ling*) animals, and the people of the Han, T'ang and Sung periods who used the character *kuei* in their personal names are too many to enumerate. But during the Ming dynasty *kuei* became taboo, which I find hard to explain.

The Ch'ing scholar Chao I (1727-1814) discusses the problem in greater detail in his *Kai-yü-ts'ung-k'ao*, under the heading "The *kuei*-taboo" (ch. 38, 5th article from the end). He begins by quoting a Sung source to the effect that in Chekiang Province people avoided the word *ya* "duck", because these birds were supposed to multiply themselves by homosexual intercourse. Then Chao says that in his own time the word *kuei* was taboo, because it was used to refer to a man who connives at his wife's fornication (*tsung-ch'i-hsing-yin*). He gives a long list of references culled from pre-Yüan sources which prove that until that period people did not shun *kuei*, and used the word in names and appellations. He also quotes Wang Shih-chên's passage translated above, and

he also professes that he does not know the reason why this word *kuei* became taboo. He quotes, however, the Yüan source *Cho-kêng-lu*, where the situation in a degenerate old family is described as "The girls act mostly as rabbits staring up at the moon, the men are all turtles that pull in their heads". Since according to the popular belief rabbits become pregnant by looking up at the moon, the first line means that the girls in that household indulged in irregular sexual relations; and since a turtle pulling in its head means that he withdraws into himself because he is afraid to look things in the face—an equivalent of our Western "ostrich policy"—the second line signifies that the men in that family connived at the scandalous behaviour of their women. Chao concludes that in the Yüan dynasty already the word *kuei* had derogatory sexual connotations.

A later Ch'ing writer, Yü Yüeh (1821–1906) quotes in his *Ch'a-hsiang-shih-szû-ch'ao*, ch. 6 page 11a, Wang Shih-chên's statement and adds a quotation from the *Hsü-shih-pi-ching* by the Ming scholar Hsü Pu. There Hsü confirms that *kuei* was not taboo during the Sung period and earlier, but that he does not know when exactly it became so; he adds that in his own time *kuei* did still occur in personal names, although very rarely. Yü Yüeh concludes from Hsü's remark that in the Ming period the character *kuei* was not yet completely taboo. I may add that as a matter of fact some Ming seals still have their top carved in the shape of a tortoise, and that one still finds Ming wooden boards carved with inscriptions where the words *kuei* or *kuei-ling* occur.

Late Ming novels and short-stories use *kuei* as a term of vulgar abuse. It became part and parcel of the Chinese abusive vocabulary, implying that the person himself or his parents indulged in unnatural vices. *Kuei* and more especially *wu-kuei* "black turtle" became a vulgar term for touts and procurers. H. A. Giles records in his Chinese-English Dictionary the term *kuei-kung* meaning "cuckold"; thus the meaning of *kuei* denoting "a man who connives at (or derives profit from) his wife's fornication", broadened into that of a man who is unwittingly deceived by his wife.

In another note, following after his article on *kuei*, Chao I also discusses the term *wang-pa* "King Eight", in common parlance used as equivalent of *kuei* in its abusive sense. Chao I points out that older texts use already occasionally "King Eight" for robbers and dissolute persons, but he registers also the variant *wang-pa* where *wang* is written with the character "to forget"; he states that this means "the person or animal that forgets the eight cardinal virtues of ritual and dutiful behaviour, modesty, shame, piety, brotherly love, loyalty and trustworthiness". "Wang-pa" survives today as an invective meaning a depraved rascal who indulges in unnatural vice, and *wang-pa-tan*

"turtle's spawn" is still a term of obscene abuse implying that the parents of the person addressed engaged in unnatural intercourse. Pictures of a turtle or the words *wang-pa* are drawn on the outer walls of houses and on the sidewalk, in a scatological sense. H. A. Giles remarks in his dictionary quoted above that these drawings and words mean "commit no nuisance", but this seems to be a secondary explanation.

Summing up the data available, I am inclined to assume that before the Yüan period already popular belief (a) associated the turtle with the male member, (b) assumed that the animal multiplied itself by unnatural intercourse, and (c) saw in its withdrawing its head the image of a man who connives at his wife's fornication. I take it that these derogatory notions co-existed with the veneration of the turtle as a "transcendental animal" without dragging it down from its pedestal, till in the Yüan period the spread of Neo-Confucianist puritanism made all subjects with sexual associations taboo, and therefore banished the turtle from all decent language and art. Once the turtle was thus officially stamped as indecent, it naturally became a popular invective; its sexual associations were stressed, while the old, venerable meaning of the animal receded into the background. In the Ch'ing dynasty no one would dream of giving his children a name containing the word *kuei*, or displaying in his house texts where this word occurs, and no one would think of using seals or other objects decorated with the image of a turtle. It should be added, however, that in the southern provinces where the ancient Chinese customs were preserved better than in north and central China, the tortoise retained its sacred meaning of symbol of longevity. In Amoy, for instance, cakes impressed with the image of a tortoise (*kuei-kuo*) are offered to Heaven during the first week of the New Year, and similar cakes are presented on anniversaries.¹ The same applies to Japan: there the tortoise and the turtle are still venerated as in pre-Yüan China, and there it is today still a common motif used in fine and applied art.

After this digression we return again to sexual life of the Sung dynasty.

Sung literature in general says little about the handbooks of sex, it would seem that their influence had began to wane. But the Bibliographical section of the Sung dynastic history still lists a few of them. Under the heading devoted to Taoist books (ch. 205) we find the *Wu-ya-tao-yin-yüan-ching-ching* "Book

¹ Cf. J. J. M. de Groot, "Les Fêtes annuellement célébrées à Emoui", in *Annales du Musée Guimet*, Paris 1886, ch. 1.

of conducting the Original Semen, of the Five Teeth", in 1 ch.; not preserved, but evidently dealing with sexual alchemy (*op. cit.*, page 12a). Further a biography of a Taoist adept written by Têng-yün-tzû (page 15a) which survives in the Taoist Canon and contains instructions for sexual alchemy; translated on p. 199 above. Also the *Ju-yao-ching*, 3 ch., described above (p. 16b). And a *Yang-shêng-yao-lu* in 3 ch. (page 19b) which probably consisted of extracts from the larger work *Yang-shêng-yao-chi*, mentioned already in the Former Han history. The medical section (ch. 207) mentions a *Yang-hsing-yao-lu* (page 21b) "Important Records of Nurturing Nature", which also must have been a handbook of sex. The page numbers given here refer to the Ch'ien-lung edition of the *Sung-shih*.

During the earlier half of the Sung dynasty sex matters were still freely discussed in broader circles, and the principles of the handbooks put into practice. This is proved by two passages in the sequel (*hsü*) that the Sung scholar-official Chang Lei (1052-1112) added to his treatise *Ming-tao-tsa-chih* "Miscellaneous Notes Clarifying Tao".

In the first Chang Lei relates that he once met a man who, in Chang's opinion, really deserved to be called a Taoist adept. This was a wandering monk called Wang Chiang. He was a great wine-bibber who looked like a madman, short and corpulent, and wearing his hair in a high top-knot, in which he had stuck a few fresh flowers. A certain high official received Wang with great honours, then asked him about the Art of the Bedchamber. But Wang refused to answer him (*op. cit.*, SF edition page 11b).

Then Chang Lei also says that he met a military prefect called Liu Chi. Although he was already seventy he still looked like a young man. When Chang asked him by what art he had achieved this remarkable result, "Liu Chi took me by the hand and replied: 'I possess an art which I shall teach you, namely that of strengthening your vital essence by means of the Art of the Bedchamber'. I then told him: 'I am but a small and poor official, I have only one wife. How could I have the means for practising that art?' Then Liu desisted from teaching me" (*op. cit.*, SF edition page 17b).

In the earlier half of the Sung dynasty Confucianist moral standards were not much in evidence in public life either. The Ch'ing scholar Yü Yüeh (1821-1906) quotes in his *Ch'a-hsiang-shih-hsü-ch'ao* (ch. 9 page 16b) two earlier sources which mention wrestling bouts by naked women (*fu-jên lo-t'i hsiang-hu*) performed in public during the Sung dynasty. These wrestling bouts formed part of a popular feast, held during the Chia-yu period (1056-1063 A.D.) near the Hsüan-tê Gate of the capital, and where all kinds of acrobats showed their skill. The Emperor and the ladies of his seraglio used to attend that festival and watch those naked women, and distributed prizes of silver and

silk among the winners.¹ The famous statesman and historian Szû-ma Kuang (1019–1086) is said to have protested against this custom as indecent, and to have presented a memorial requesting the discontinuation of this sport.²

It would seem that exposure of the male and female naked body, including mixed bathing, was objected to as incompatible with Confucianist standards of decency. In later times, however, one finds occasional traces of magical considerations, viz. that the naked body, and more especially exposure of the genitalia, wards off evil spirits and other harmful influences. Early in the 17th century the cruel war-lord Chang Hsien-chung (1605–1647), for a brief time military ruler of Szuchuan Province, “exposed the nude bodies of slain women outside the wall of a town he was attacking in order to produce a magical effect and prevent the defenders’ cannon from firing” (cf. J. B. Parsons’ article “Attitudes towards the late Ming Rebellions”, in “Oriens Extremus”, vol. VI, 1959, p. 180). And during the Ch’ing dynasty pictures of naked men and women in sexual congress were widely used as amulets (see below, p. 332, note 1). I have found no indication, however, that such beliefs existed already in the Sung period. Perhaps they arose as a concomitant of the taboos which later began to surround sexual life in an ever-increasing measure.³

In Chapter VII, while discussing prostitution during the T’ang dynasty, it was pointed out that it is difficult to obtain an insight into the various classes of prostitution, and their respective position in the social pattern of that time. For the situation in the Sung period we are somewhat better informed. Three descriptions of life in the Southern Sung capital Hangchow, recorded by eye-witnesses, supply reliable data on this subject.

The antiquarian scholar Chou Mi (1232–1308) distinguishes in ch. 6 of his *Wu-lin-chiu-shih* “Old Affairs of Hangchow” three different classes of prostitution. He begins with describing the lowest class, i.e. common brothels for poor people and soldiers; second, wine houses with facilities for prostitution; and third, the high-class entertainment as offered by the houses of the courtezans.

The article on low brothels is entitled *wa-tzû kou-lan*. The meaning of *wa-tzû* or *wa-shê* is uncertain, it has something to do with *wa* “roof tiles”. *Kou-lan* means “enclosure”, and occurs already in Han literature as a term

¹ Quoted from the *I-yüeh* by the Ming scholar Chang Hsüan; the *I-yüeh* is found in the *Ling nan-i-shu*, 2nd part, but this source is not accessible to me at the time of writing.

² Quoted from the *Lo-mo-t’ing-tsa-chi* by the Ch’ing writer Ch’iao Sung-nien; also inaccessible to me.

³ It has now been demonstrated that such beliefs about nudity go back long before the Sung dynasty. See Henry (1999), cited in the Introduction. [PRG]

for houses where professional women were kept. Evidently Chou Mi considered these low-class establishments not worthy of a further discussion, he confines himself to recording their location. For more information on the *wa-shê* we must turn to another contemporary source, the *Tu-ch'êng-chi-shêng* "Notes on the Sights of the Capital", written in 1235 by a scholar who signs only his literary name Nai-tê-wêng. He says:

Wa-shê. This term refers to the impermanence of venal love. I do not know when these establishments originated. But when I was staying in the capital, both gentry and commoners used to give themselves over to unbridled debauch in those places, and also younger people in general used those to ruin themselves in dissipation.

The *Mêng-liang-lu*, an extensive collection of notes on Hangchow compiled by the Sung scholar Wu Tzû-mu, says in ch. 19 that the term *wa-shê* refers to the impermanence of the liaisons conducted there, because they are cheap as tiles and scatter as easily. However, this seems a secondary explanation; *wa-tzû* was the name of a market in Hangchow, and probably low brothels were originally located there. The *Mêng-liang-lu* adds that when the Imperial Camp was located in the region between Hangchow and Shao-hsing, the army established outside the city a number of *wa-shê*, lodging there harlots and musicians for the recreation of soldiers on leave. Then the text repeats the statement of the *Tu-ch'êng-chi-shêng* about gentry and commoners also using those brothels. Later sources say that during the Sung dynasty prostitutes for the army were recruited from local brothels, on a monthly basis and against a regular salary.¹ Evidently the *wa-shê* were a special kind of government brothels, in the first place destined for low officers and soldiers, and those civilians who could not afford to visit the commercial brothels. Soon, however, these places were frequented also by wealthy degenerates in search of new excitement for their jaded appetites. The same later texts quoted above state that in the Sung dynasty the institution of the *kuan-chi* "government prostitutes" was reorganized. Female relatives of men convicted of certain crimes, and female prisoners of war were assigned as prostitutes to the district and prefectural offices in the provinces, and officials posted there who had left their womenfolk behind in their native place or in the capital, were entitled to hire those women from the government. If they wanted to keep such women with them upon their transfer to another post, they could do so after having versed an additional payment.

¹ This information is based on notes in the *Chin-yü-lu* by the Yüan scholar Hsü Ta-ch'ô. I followed the text as quoted by Yü Yüeh in ch. 9 of his *Ch'a-hsiang-shih-szû-ch'ao*, page 9a, and by the modern scholar Têng Chih-ch'êng in ch. 4 of his *Ku-tung-so-chi*, page 18a; the latter does not quote his source.

It may be added here already that in the Ming period, novels and short stories occasionally refer to low-class brothels used by soldiers, sailors and the scum of the city. At that time the inmates of those houses were designated by the term *p'iao* "harlot". Prostitutes of this lowest class were viewed with contempt, not because of their profession, but because they were criminals or relatives of criminals, and moreover lacked the artistic accomplishments of the better-class prostitutes. *P'iao* thus became a term of vulgar abuse.

After the *wa-shê* or low-class brothels, Chou Mi describes in his *Wu-lin-chiu-shih* the second, better class establishments, namely the *chiu-lou* or "wine houses".

Chou Mi divides these wine houses into two categories, viz. those operated by the government, *kuan-k'u*, and those managed by private enterprise. The first are controlled by the Board of Revenue, and originally served only wine and light appetizers, they did not provide regular dinners. Chou Mi lists eleven of such establishments by name, and says that in each of them there were installed a few score *kuan-chi* or "government prostitutes". The girls were beautifully dressed and seasonal feasts were celebrated there with pomp and circumstance. These houses were more or less reserved for government personnel, it was not easy for outsiders to visit them.

Of the privately managed houses Chou Mi lists eighteen, they were real restaurants, which at the same time provided female company. He says:

Every wine house listed here is divided into about ten compartments. The wine cups and jars are all of silver, those shops vie with each other in luxury. Every one of them has a few score unregistered private courtezans, all dressed beautifully according to the latest fashion, who try to outdo each other in charming the guests. In summer they adorn their hairdress with a profusion of jasmine flowers, the fragrance of which fills the gaily decorated streets. Leaning on the balustrade those girls invite customers, which is called 'selling themselves to the guests'. They are accompanied by young maid servants who will crowd around the guests uninvited, and sing songs as loudly as they can, in order to obtain a tip; this is called 'scouring the guests'.

Thereafter Chou Mi enumerates the amazing variety of food served in those places. There was no regular menu, a crowd of waiters and vendors each carrying a tray with one special kind of delicacy circulated among the tables, and the customers could order what they liked. Chou Mi marvels at the retentive memory of those waiters who could remember one hundred orders without making a single mistake. This system of serving food is still found to-day in some Cantonese restaurants; it is to be noted that in Canton are preserved several ancient Chinese customs that have now become obsolete in Central and North China. Chou Mi concludes this passage with the words:

Those places are full of music and laughter from evening till dawn, every night and every day, chariots and horses stand waiting outside in rows, no matter whether there is storm or rain, or whether it is summer or winter.

The *Tu-ch'êng-chi-shêng*, the other Sung sourced mentioned above, adds the following information on these wine houses:

The so-called 'Hermitage' (?) wine houses', *an-chiu-lou*, are those which provide also women for the guests. On the second floor there are secretly installed beds for that purpose. Such special wine houses have bamboo lampions of red (silk) suspended on their front doors, they are displayed both in dry and rainy weather, being protected by covers of plaited bamboo leaves; for it is by those lampions that such special wine houses can be recognized. The other large wine houses provide only girls to keep the guests company while drinking; only steady customers are allowed to sleep with those women.

Apparently these wine houses were frequented by middle-class merchants and lower officials.

After having discussed this second category, Chou Mi goes on to the third and best brothels, which he calls *ko-kuan* "houses of singing-girls". These were located in a quarter named P'ing-k'ang-li, after the famous brothel-quarter of the T'ang capital mentioned on page 170 above. Apparently these *ko-kuan* were also called *ch'a-fang* "tea houses". At present this term refers in China to shops where tea is sold, but in Japan to-day still the term *cha-ya* "tea house", "geisha house" has the ancient Chinese meaning of *maison de rendezvous*, in contradistinction to the *jorô-ya*, or common brothel.

These *ko-kuan* were the abodes of the accomplished courtezans skilled in poetry, dancing and singing, and frequented by high officials, wealthy merchants, and writers and artists who were rich or had rich patrons. Chou Mi makes it clear that visiting those places was a very expensive undertaking. As soon as a guest had come in and drank his first cup of tea, he had to pay several thousand cash; this was called *tien-hua-ch'a* "the tea-cup of checking flowers". When he had been led upstairs, he was offered a cup of wine, and again had to distribute several strings of cash; this was called *chih-chiu* "paying for the wine". Only thereafter the girls made their appearance, the guests could choose their companions, wine and food were brought in and the feast started. Besides the costs of the entertainment, there were also numerous other extra-expenses, every stage of the entertainment was accompanied by a fixed ritual and necessitated more tips. If, for instance, a guest wanted the company of a girl from another house, she had to be fetched in a sedan-chair and with an appropriate suite—even if she lived in the house right across the

street. On the other hand the customers were served only the best of everything, and the houses were luxuriously appointed. All furniture was of excellent quality and the interior was decorated with fine antiques. Everything was done for the comfort of the guests, in winter the rooms were heated by large copper braziers, and in summer cooled by basins filled with blocks of ice. Chou Mi completes his description with the words:

Also, there were drinking utensils, head-wear, quilts, dresses etc. which the guests could rent for their personal use. When an elegant guest arrived in such a house, he would be provided with all he needed, everything clean and new. Those who are not familiar with those places are not aware of this.

These Sung sources thus give a clear idea of the three kinds of prostitution that existed during that period. Although these descriptions apply especially to Hangchow, the Southern Sung capital and the surrounding area, if one makes allowance for some local traits, they can be taken to represent also the situation in other parts of the Empire.

As during the T'ang period, the courtezans of high-class houses formed an integral part of social life, and also took part in private parties and ceremonies. The *Mêng-liang-lu* mentioned above gives in ch. 20 a circumstantial account of marriage and related customs in Hangchow, from which it appears i.a. that courtezans had their appointed place in wedding ceremonies. Hereunder follows a summary of that account, which at the same time supplies useful source-material for the history of Chinese marriage customs.

A go-between arranges the first exchange of informal documents between the two families, which thereupon consult the oracle concerning the proposed match. If the oracle is favourable, then the formal documents are exchanged. These contain detailed information about the two parties, stating names, rank and offices held by the family heads during the last three generations; the dates of birth of the son and daughter; a list of relatives living in their household; and an inventory of all the family property. On the side of the bride a list of her trousseau is added, and a statement relating to the property that will be assigned to her upon her marriage. If this information proves mutually satisfactory, a meeting of the future pair is arranged during a banquet where they see each other face to face, a ceremony called *hsiang-ch'in*. They exchange a toast, and if the groom approves of the bride, he sticks a golden hair needle in his hair; if he does not like her, he presents her with two bolts of brocade. If everything proves satisfactory, an exchange of presents takes place, and an auspicious date for the wedding is selected. After several more exchanges of presents, many of which have a symbolical meaning (for

instance a pair of goldfish suggesting fertility),¹ on the appointed day the groom goes to fetch the bride, accompanied by a large suite, including rented courtezans and musicians. Arrived at the bride's house, the groom has to entertain her family with the presents of food and drink he has brought along with him. Then the bride ascends her ceremonial palanquin and is conducted in state to the groom's house, escorted by a bevy of courtezans who carry flowers and red candles. It is the courtezans who lead the bride to the nuptial room, the groom is brought there by the master of ceremonies. They exchange the wedding-cup, and locks of their hair are knotted together. That completes the wedding ceremony, they are then led to the main hall of the house where the bride is formally presented to the groom's family, and to the soul-tablets of his ancestors.

In later times this ceremony underwent few essential changes. The preliminary viewing of the future pair seems to have become obsolete in China in the course of the Ming dynasty; then the pair saw each other face to face for the first time when the bride's veil was removed in the ancestral hall. But in Japan it has survived in old-style marriages till the present day, and is called *mi-ai*.

In the Sung period the Chinese interior had undergone great changes. Whereas during the T'ang dynasty the middle class dwelling house consisted of open halls which were divided into smaller apartments by movable partitioning screens, the Sung house was divided into rooms by solid walls. Since thus more wall space had become available, the hanging scroll came to the fore as a part of interior decoration. The floors consisted of flagstones, in winter covered with rugs. People did not any longer take off their shoes upon entering the house. They sat no longer on the floor, high tables and chairs of carved wood had now come into regular use.

The bedstead was now even more of a separate room than before. It was a compartment as high as the room it was standing in, made of solid wood with "windows" of lattice work. In the back of this compartment stood the couch with its own curtains, next to it there was sufficient space left for a toilet stand and a small tea table. In front this compartment was again closed by curtains. Sleeping comfort was increased by the introduction of two utensils used inside the bed. One was the *chu-fu-jên* "the bamboo wife", a tubular bamboo cage of about three foot long which was placed between the legs during hot summer nights to relieve the inconvenience of excessive perspiration. Chinese

¹ The fish is a very old Chinese symbol of fecundity. Cf. C. Hentze, "Le Poisson comme symbole de fécondité dans la Chine ancienne", in: Bulletin of the Royal Museum, Brussels 1930.

emigrants imported it into the former Netherlands East Indies and the rest of South-east Asia, where it is called in English "Dutch wife". The other utensil was the *t'ang-p'o-tzû* "the hot old woman", a copper hot-water bottle used to warm the bed in winter. Smaller hot-water bottles used especially for warming the feet were called *chiieh-p'o-tzû* "old women for the feet". According to the Ch'ing scholar Chao I both these homely but useful objects date from the Sung period; cf. his *K'ai-yü-ts'ung-k'ao*, 15th article of ch. 33, where various Sung authors are quoted.

It would seem that during the Northern Sung dynasty (960-1127) both sexes dressed in approximately the same manner as during the later part of the T'ang period. Plate XI shows a lady in ceremonial dress. It is a detail of a large Buddhist painting representing the Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha. This picture bears the date 983 A.D. and was discovered at Tun-huang. The detail reproduced here shows a *donatrice*, painted in the lower right corner; the entire picture will be found in W. Cohn's "Chinese Painting" (Phaedon Press, London 1948), plate 31. The lady carries in her raised hands a small bottle with holy water. Attention is drawn to the long, trailing robe with the capacious sleeves, and the broad scarf draped round her shoulders the ends of which hang down till the floor. The headdress is most elaborate. Two tresses called *pin*, or *ch'an-pin* "cicada tresses", hang down along the temples, with entwined strings of small flowers—or perhaps beads. These two tresses had a great appeal for Chinese men, they are frequently referred to in love-poetry, where they are usually likened to light clouds. A curved comb is stuck in the hair in front, and on the right and left three hair needles, with protruding ends tipped with ornamental knobs. The chignon is embellished with a hair-ornament of beaten gold in the shape of a Phoenix-bird with upturned tail, and with flowers made of the same material; these ornaments are more clearly visible on Plate XIII. The face has two large, well-marked spots of rouge directly under the eyes, and three mouches in the middle of the forehead.

It is not without interest to compare this picture with that of a Japanese *oiran* or high-class geisha, reproduced on Plate XII, and dating from nearly a thousand years later. It is the *oiran* Tachibana, of the Tsuru-ya brothel in Edo (Tōkyō), drawn ca. 1840 by the well-known colour-print artist Eizan. One notices the striking similarity: the trailing robes, the long, capacious sleeves, and especially the elaborate hair dress with the two temple tresses; the comb in front, and the protruding hair needles with the ornamental knobs. This proves again how faithfully some ancient Chinese customs were preserved in Japan.

Plate XIII are a donor and donatrice, details of another painting recovered from Tun-huang, and representing the deity Avalokiteśvara accompanied

by two attendants; it is executed in full colours on silk, and bears the date 968 A.D., the very beginning of the Northern Sung dynasty. This picture shows that also men's dress of that time was practically the same as during the later part of the T'ang dynasty. Note the official cap with the starched wings, the robe closed at the neck, and the belt incrustated with a plaque of jade. The man holds in his hands a portable incense burner provided with a long handle.

It would seem that whereas both sexes continued to wear approximately the same style of costume throughout the Northern Sung dynasty, during the subsequent Southern Sung period (1127-1279) there were considerable changes. This need not astonish us, for the transfer of the court from Pien-liang to Hangchow in the south implied a complete change of social and cultural surroundings. These modifications in dress and fashion, however, can be stated only in general terms. At the present stage, our knowledge of the history of Chinese dress—a much-neglected subject¹—is but scanty. The Sung pictures preserved are mostly copies, it must be feared that those who made them often arbitrarily changed details. And those few Sung works which represent human figures and which are generally considered as authentic, need not necessarily reproduce the fashion that prevailed in the artists' own time. In fact most painters preferred to depict their subjects in archaizing dress and setting. Even to-day Chinese portrait painters will often draw a contemporary person in the costume of the Ming period. Hence the following remarks are made with due reserve.

During the Southern Sung period there was a general tendency to wider outer robes, both men and women wore capacious robes that trailed along the floor behind them. Since fashion now decreed that bare throats and bosoms of women were unseemly, women started to wear under their robes a short jacket, buttoned in front and provided with a high, tight-fitting collar. The apron-like garment popular during the T'ang period seems to have fallen into disuse, but now we find women wearing over their outer robe a kind of mantle, open in front and fastened by two excessively long bands that trail down till the floor; cf. Figures 4 and 8. Sometimes this mantle took the shape of a short jacket, as shown on Figure 7. On Figures 8 and 11 one sees also a golden neckring with in front a large ornamental lock. It would seem that these neckrings, called *ch'ang-ming-so* "long-life locks" became fashionable during the S. Sung period. They were a kind of amulets, indicating that the spirit of long life and happiness is securely locked within,

¹ Of the scarce literature on this subject I mention Alide and Wolfram Eberhard, "Die Mode der Han- und Chin-Zeit", Antwerp 1946; Eberhard, LAC pp. 223-230; J. G. Mahler, "The Westerners among the figurines of the T'ang Dynasty of China", Serie Orientale Roma XX, ch. II: A study of Chinese costume in its relationship to the figurines (Rome 1959).

and will continue to confer blessings on the wearer. To-day silver or gold models of such "lucky locks" are commonly given to new-born children, and worn by them suspended on a cord round the neck on the 19th day of the second lunar month, the birthday of Buddha. In the Ming dynasty these neckrings were still used by grown-up women; it appears that women used to keep on this auspicious ornament even when undressed for sexual congress (cf. ECP Plate XV).

In the S. Sung period women applied rouge more discreetly than before. Cheeks were only slightly reddened, one does not find any more the thickly laid on, well-defined red spots under the eyes which were the fashion in T'ang and Northern Sung times. As a curiosity I may mention a custom that ca. 1000 A.D. was observed by the women of the Liao dynasty in the North. The Ch'ing scholar Yü Chêng-hsieh quotes in ch. 4, page 9b of his *Kuei-szû-ts'un-kao* older sources as saying that those ladies covered their faces entirely with a yellow ointment, and then painted their mouths very red and their eyebrows black. This fashion was called *fo-chuang* "Buddha-face", evidently because the effect was that of the impassive face of a gilded Buddha-statue. It is not impossible that this special make-up had also sexual implications, it being meant to suggest that the woman was the Tantric *śakti* or female counterpart of the man, who during the sexual act would increase his vital force; cf. the discussion of *śakti* in Appendix I of the present volume.

In the Sung dynasty the art of wood-block printing made great progress. Now books could be published in larger numbers than previously when they had to be copied out by hand. This development promoted the spread of learning.

Women also had obtained more facilities for acquiring literary knowledge. The daughters of middle-class families generally learned next to the traditional feminine skills also to read and write. From now on we find numerous cases of married women versed in literature, and poetesses are not any longer found nearly exclusively among courtezans and singing-girls. Many ladies also acquired fame for their proficiency in calligraphy and painting. It must be noted that during the T'ang and preceding dynasties calligraphy had always been considered as superior to painting, and as being the only art of the brush that was to be practised by men of learning and ranking officials. Painting had been regarded as a professional skill, the work of artisans rather than of artists. During the Sung dynasty, however, monochrome ink-painting developed, a kind of impressionistic technique aimed at rendering the essential features of the subject

in a few expressive brush strokes. Since this style of painting, based on the same principles as calligraphy, was considered as worthy of being practised by the literary class, it soon became a popular pastime of both men and women. While up to the Sung dynasty one reads only of women who acquired fame because of their literary achievements, from now on one meets the names of a number of lady-painters.

Many a wife of a scholar-official took an active interest in the literary and artistic activities of her husband. Community of interest provided, then as now, a solid foundation for a successful married life, and from then on Chinese history mentions many instances of happy marriages of couples united by a common love of literary pursuits.

One lady has written herself a record of her married life. This was the Sung poetess Li Ch'ing-chao, better known by her literary name I-an, who lived from 1081 till ca. 1140.

Li Ch'ing-chao had grown up in a poor but well-known literary family. Her father was the famous poet Li K'o-fei, her mother a daughter of the scholar-official Wang Kung-chên (1012-1085). When she was nineteen years old she was married to a young student called Chao Ming-ch'êng, who was deeply interested in antiquarian studies. His great ambition was to compile a comprehensive account of all important inscriptions on bronze and stone that survived. After he had obtained an official post, he devoted all his leisure hours to these studies, assisted by Li Ch'ing-chao, who was his principal wife.

Unfortunately they lived in a time of political turmoil. The Chin Tartars beyond the northern frontier had become increasingly powerful, several times they invaded the Empire and defeated the Sung armies. In 1127 they conquered the northern half of the Sung Empire, and occupied the capital Pien-liang (modern K'ai-fêng). The Emperor had to withdraw to the south, and established a new capital in Lin-an, the modern Hangchow. This marked the beginning of the Southern Sung dynasty which lasted till 1279 A.D. when the Mongols temporarily occupied entire China.

Li Ch'ing-chao's husband died just at the time when the Sung administration was being removed to the south, leaving with his wife their collection of books and antiques, and the manuscript of his life-work, the *Chin-shih-lu* "Record of Inscriptions on Bronze and Stone", in thirty chapters. Then she started on a protracted peregrination, filled with hardship and danger, but always trying to save as much as possible of her late husband's treasured collection, and always carrying with her the manuscript of his book. When at last she could settle down in Hangchow, she edited the manuscript and added a postscript where she described the various vicissitudes the book had gone through. At the same time this postscript has become a brief but stirring autobiography-

ical record, which in its unassuming simplicity stands as a testimonial to a great love. Below I translate a few passages which throw light on their married life and her attitude to her husband and his work.¹

When we were married my husband was twenty-one, he was a student in the National University in Pien-liang. Both our families were poor and we led a simple life since we had to be very careful of our expenditure. But every month after my husband had received his stipendium he would pawn some clothes and with the 500 cash thus realized stroll to the Hsiang-kuo Temple, and on the market there buy a few copies of old inscriptions together with some fruit. Back home we would together go over those documents, munching fruit all the while, and we felt as happy as if we were living in the Abode of the Immortals.

"Two years later my husband received an official appointment in the Provinces. Then our food and clothing were assured, and he could gratify his interest in old documents from near and distant places all over the Empire. In course of time he assembled an extensive collection. When he found rare texts in the house of his father or in those of his friends, he would copy those out, and in this work found an ever increasing interest. And when he saw a specimen of the calligraphy or painting by some famous artist of old or later times, or a rare bronze vessel of high antiquity, he would again pawn his clothes in order to purchase it. I remember that once in the years 1102-1106 a man brought a picture of peonies by the famous painter Hsü Hsi to our house, asking 20,000 cash for it. Now this was at that time more than even wealthy noblemen could afford, so how would we ever have been able to get that amount of money? We kept the picture for two days in our house, but we could think of no way of collecting the money, and we had to return it. I remember that thereafter my husband and I were looking at each other gloomily for several days.

Thereafter, when Chao Ming-ch'êng had been promoted, he could buy more books and manuscripts, and so they gradually built up a small library.

He spent most of his salary on buying books. Everytime he had purchased a work, we would read and correct it together, then put the volumes in order and write title labels for them. And if my husband obtained an old picture-scroll or an antique bronze vessel we would admire it together, roll and unroll the picture, and pat and feel the bronze, pointing out to each other small defects, leaving off only late in the night when the candles had burned down. In this manner we assembled only perfect works of art, and our collection was soon better than those of our friends.

Since I have a good memory, every day after the evening meal we would sit in our Kuei-lai library and while drinking tea point at the piled

¹ I used the text of the Postface as it appears in vol. 5 of Chao Ming-ch'êng's *Chün-shih-shi*, in the SPTK ed., with corrections by the editor.

bookshelves. One of us would say: 'A certain passage is to be found in such-and-such a book, on such-and-such a page and in such-and-such a line'. We would vie with each other in this game, and the winner was allowed to drink his tea first. When one of us had guessed right we would lift our teacups laughing heartily, so happy that often all the tea spilled on our dress and there was nothing left to drink. How gladly we would have lived on in this manner till our heads had grown grey! Although we were still in straitened circumstances, our spirits were free.

However, the military situation was steadily worsening, and when Chao Ming-ch'êng had been appointed as prefect in Shantung, near the front,

We heard that the barbarians were attacking the capital. Suddenly we stared at all our treasured belongings, we started to pack them in boxes and baskets, filled with sorrowful foreboding. For we realized that we would probably not be able to keep them much longer.

During the years 1127-29 the Sung armies were being pushed back to the south, and the Chao family moved from one place to another, everytime compelled to leave behind or sell part of their cherished books and antiques. In the summer of 1129 Chao Ming-ch'êng was received in audience by the Emperor, now establishing himself in the southern capital Hangchow, and he was appointed prefect of Wu-hsing in Chekiang Province. Because of the ever-worsening situation he resolved to proceed there alone, having first brought his wife to a safer place. They travelled part of the way together, by boat.

On the 13th day of the 6th moon my husband shouldered his bundle and left the boat. Standing there on the shore in his travelling robe his spirit was undaunted as that of a tiger, and his eyes shone. While we were taking leave of each other, I staying in the boat, my heart was suddenly filled with dread. I called out to him: 'What shall I do when I hear that the situation in the city gets worse?' Waving his hand at me he called out over the water: 'You won't be able to preserve all. First discard the heavy luggage, then clothes and quilts. Then the books and paintings, and finally the antique bronzes. But the pieces of porcelain you must carry yourself, they shall perish or survive together with you!' Then he galloped away along the muddy road.

She never saw him again. After he had joined the Emperor's army camp, he fell ill and died. He left barely enough for her and his concubines to live on. Three years she travelled up and down the free zones, sometimes staying with friends, other times with relatives. Of this period dates probably the following poem, a *tz'ü* in the metre Ts'ai-sang-tzû.

In front of our window
 Are the banana-trees we planted,
 Their green shadow fills the yard.
 Their green shadow fills the yard,
 Their leaves unfold and fold as if
 They want to bare their feelings.

Sadly reclining on my pillow
 Deep in the night I listen to the rain,
 Dripping on the leaves.
 Dripping on the leaves—
 That he can't hear that sound again
 Is breaking my heart.¹

Gradually she had sold all her belongings, the last antiques left were stolen by robbers. But she always jealously guarded her husband's manuscript. In 1132, when she was fifty-two, she could settle down in Hangchow; she edited the manuscript there and wrote the postscript. At the end of it she added in resignation: "In order to have, one must be prepared also to lose; if one wants to be united, one must also reckon with separation. This is the way of this world".

The postscript is dated 1234 A.D. Having thus made her husband's manuscript ready for publication, she again left Hangchow. It is not known when or where she died.

¹ Text in Hu Shih's "Anthology of Tz'u", *Tz'u-hsüan*, Commercial Press, Shanghai 1928, page 178.

CHAPTER XIII

MONGOL OR YUAN DYNASTY

1279-1368

FOURTH PART

MONGOL RULE AND MING RESTORATION

Yüan and Ming Periods, 1280-1644 A.D.

Sex in Literature and Art

CHAPTER NINE

MONGOL OR YÜAN DYNASTY

1279-1367

When the successors of Genghiz Khan, the formidable conqueror, turned their attention to China, their first thought was how to obtain the most loot in the briefest possible time. The Mongols imposed a harsh occupation régime in the north, and when in 1279 the last Sung Emperor in the south had been defeated, Mongol military rule was extended over entire China, a rule that was to last till 1367. Khublai Khan established his capital in Peking, surrounded by Mongol and foreign advisers, among the latter also the famous Venetian traveller Marco Polo. The military governors appointed to rule the provinces were also often foreigners, e.g. Seyyid Edjell, an Arab, who was governor of Yünnan Province and greatly promoted the spread of Islam in S.W. China.

This was a novel experience for the Chinese people. At times parts of the country had been under foreign rule, but then the rest of the Empire had at least been in Chinese hands, and governed by Chinese dynasties. Moreover, previous foreign régimes had admired Chinese culture, and soon adopted Chinese language and customs. But the Mongol occupation seemed to portend the end of China and Chinese culture. The Mongols despised everything Chinese, their only concern was by ruthless methods to drain the wealth of the country, and to utilize China as a basis for military operations against its neighbours—Manchuria, Korea, Japan and Indo-China.

Thus the Chinese found themselves confronted with all the problems that face an occupied nation. Patriots organized resistance movements, notably the Po-lien-hui, the White Lotus Sect, others fawned on the Mongols for the advancement of their private interests, others again collaborated with them because they thought that the only way to mitigate the rigours of the harsh alien rule. Many also withdrew to inaccessible mountain retreats to avoid the hardships and humiliations they were exposed to in the cities. The rest of the scholar-officials and intellectuals made shift as well as they could.

One of their first worries was how to prevent their womenfolk from being importuned by the conquerors. Householders, having Mongol soldiers billeted on them, tried to keep their women as much as possible confined to their

own apartments, and now began to appreciate more the Confucianist rules for the seclusion of women. One suspects that it was during this period that the germs of Chinese prudery came into existence, and the beginnings of their tendency to keep their sexual life a secret from all outsiders.

Two moralistic treatises of that time give a vivid picture of the excessive prudery then propagated. These two texts belong to the class called *Kung-kuo-ko* "Tables of Merits and Demerits", i.e. lists of meritorious deeds alternating with lists of sins. To each item of these lists is added a moralistic evaluation, expressed in a certain amount of "merits" and "demerits"; for instance, "Saving the life of a human being, 500 merits (+500)", "Killing a human being, 1000 demerits (-1000)". Household holders could by regularly consulting such lists calculate for themselves their moral record.

Such tables were equally popular among strict Confucianists and bigoted Taoists or Buddhists. As a matter of fact the texts of the two tables discussed here although predominantly Confucianist are included in the Taoist collection *Tao-tsang-chi-yao*. Both texts are ascribed to Lü Yen, better known as Lü Tung-pin, an official who lived ca. 870 A.D. and who is said to have found the Elixir of Immortality and ascended Heaven as an Immortal. This attribution is of course entirely fictitious. After Lü Yen had become firmly established in the Taoist pantheon as one of the Eight Immortals, numerous abstruse and erotic texts were arbitrarily attributed to him (see pp. 277 and 285 below). Style and content of the texts point to the Yüan period, and certainly not to the T'ang dynasty. They were edited by Ming scholars, i.e. the famous poet T'ao Wang-ling, who became a *chin-shih* in 1589.

The first and most detailed treatise is entitled *Shih-chieh-kung-kuo-lu* "Table of Merits and Demerits regarding the Ten Precepts". It is divided into ten sections, each of which discusses various merits and sins belonging to the ten precepts that regulate the life of a Buddhist monk, "Not to kill", "Not to steal", etc. Here we shall discuss only the third section, regarding "Not to commit debauchery". It opens with a list of sexual sins of a general character, an interesting example of moralistic casuistry. I summarize the content in the following table. (See p. 247).

A detailed analysis of the background of this table would necessitate a lengthy sociological discussion. Here I confine myself to a brief discussion of the salient points.

Debauch motivated by carnal desire only and lacking all deeper sentiment is considered worst; except in the case of a prostitute, for society has assigned her the function to gratify precisely such desire. If the act is motivated by genuine passion, the degree of guilt decreases; however, becoming violently enamoured of a prostitute is considered as relatively grave, because it proves

nature of sin:	committed against:			
	married women	widows and virgins	nuns	prostitutes
<i>pao-yin</i> "violent debauch", i.e. possessing a woman against her will without really caring for her, and only to display one's wealth and power	- 500 if servants' wives: - 200	- 1000 if servants' widows, or maids: - 500	countless demerits	- 50 applies when she is unwilling because she has afixed patron, or other attachment
<i>ch'ih-yin</i> "crazed debauch", i.e. motivated by blind passion	- 200 if servants' wives: - 100	- 500 if servants' widows, or house-maids: - 200	- 1000	- 100
<i>yüan-yeh-yin</i> "predestined debauch", i.e. illicit intercourse with mutual consent, of a man and woman predestined to meet	- 100 if servants' wives: - 50	- 200 if servants' widows, or house-maids: - 100	- 500	- 20
<i>hsüan-yin</i> "proclaiming debauch", i.e. talking to others about the above sins	- 50	- 100	- 200	- 5
<i>wang-yin</i> "idle debauch", i.e. averring that one has sinned as above, while in fact one has not	- 50	- 200	- 200	- 10

that one has a dissolute character. The guilt further decreases in those cases where illicit intercourse is the result of actions of the man and woman in a previous existence, and their meeting each other and falling in love was predestined.

The excessively high degree of guilt assigned to sins against nuns must be considered as a concession to Buddhist and Taoist readers; it is more or less artificial, and does not reflect the true emotional reaction of the Chinese people in general. Very true, on the contrary, is the grave view taken of sins against widows and virgins. This is to be explained by the supreme importance of the cult of the dead, and the sacred duty of every woman to continue a man's lineage; debauching a widow is offending the soul of the dead husband,

and debauching a virgin makes her unfit for her future duty as a wife. Moreover, widows and virgins are less protected than married women, hence wantonly defaming them is more serious than in the case of married women.

That idly boasting about intercourse with a prostitute (10 demerits) is considered twice as serious as talking about having really committed that sin (5 demerits), is explained by arguing that in the first case one incites others to that sin while himself remaining without guilt.

Thereafter follows a list which illustrates the strict Confucianist rules for the sexual behaviour of a householder towards his women, which I translate hereunder.

Keeping an excessively large number of wives and concubines	50
Showing preference for one of one's women	10
If this includes encouraging the preferred person to be rude to the others	20
Comparing the charms of one's womenfolk	1
Gloating over the charms of one's womenfolk	1
Exciting lustful thoughts in oneself	10
Showing one's nakedness when easing nature in the night	1
Lewd dreams, every time	1
If such a dream occasions a lewd action	5
Singing frivolous songs	2
Studying such songs	20
Reading novels and other light literature	5
Using frivolous language	2
If no women are present	1
If done with the intent to excite lust in women	10
Keeping on one's shelves erotic pictures, for every one	10
Careless behaviour	5
If no women are present	1
If done with the intent to excite lust in women	20
Touching the hands of one's womenfolk while handing things to them	1
If with lustful intent	10
Exception: if done to assist them in a case of emergency	none
But if then such touching excites lust	10
Not yielding the way to a woman in the street	1
If at the same time one looks at the woman	2
If one looks longingly after her	5
If one conceives lewd thoughts about her	10
Carrying on one's person aphrodisiac incense	1
Burning the same	1
Entering one's women's quarters without warning	1
Associating with friends addicted to whoring and gambling	50

Going to bed early and rising late (so as to devote much time to sexual dalliance)	- 1
Encouraging one's women to devote much time to their make-up . .	- 1
To watch frivolous theatrical plays, every time	- 1
Taking part in same	- 50
Talking frivolously to one's women, without lewd intent	- 1
If with the intent to excite lust	- 20
If one's women engage in frivolous talk, not to restrain them	- 1
If one allows himself to become excited thereby	- 10
Praising the virtue of one's women	none
Praising their talent and ability	- 1
Praising their skill in embroidery, sewing etc.	- 2
Praising their wisdom and generous nature	- 5
Telling one's women about some love-affair	- 10
If done with the intent to excite lustful thoughts in them	- 20
Telling smutty stories in order to excite them	- 20
Exception: If one tells such stories in order to develop the women's sense of shame	none
Reading love-poetry in front of one's women	- 5
If done in order to excite their lust	- 20
Reading poetry that extols profound passion, every time	- 10
If done to educate one's women	none
Talking to one's women about their make-up, hairdress, personal adornment etc.	- 1
Showing them exaggerated politeness	- 1

The last item, and those about not praising one's women's good qualities, indicate that the man should not hinder his women in attaining to the virtue of humility. These items also foreshadow the bigotted dictum that became current during the Ming dynasty: "If a woman has no talents, that is virtue for her", *nü-tzû wu-tsai, pien shih tê*. Finally, this list eloquently attests the narrow Confucianist view that exercising the coitus with one's spouses is acquitting oneself of his sacred duty to family and state, and that to take pleasure therein is indecent.

The second text, entitled *Ching-shih-kung-kuo-ko* "Table of Merits and Demerits to warn the world", is much shorter and more draconic. I translate the following selected items:

Offending against one's parents or ancestors	- 1000
Violating a chaste woman	- 1000
Causing the death of a human being	- 1000
Selling a house-maid as a prostitute	- 1000
Infanticide	- 1000
Producing erotic books, songs, or pictures	- 1000
(Same demerits for publishing them)	
Slandering a virtuous woman	- 500

Joking about women	- 50
Joking about gods and deities	- 30
Speaking dirty language	- 10
Burning another's house	- 500
Scheming to make a widow or nun one's concubine	- 500
Showing preference for one special wife or concubine	- 500
Abortion	- 300
If done to conceal an illicit relation	- 600
Taking another man whoring or gambling	- 300
Encouraging a man to sell his wife	- 300
Not restraining a wife when she maltreats a concubine, depending on the seriousness of each case	- 100 to 300
If the maltreatment results in the death of the victim	- 1000
Failure to marry off maid-servants	- 200
Sporting with a prostitute or a catamite, every time	- 50
Having licentious theatrical plays performed, every time	- 20
Drinking to intoxication	- 1
Not keeping men and women separate in one's household	- 3
Throwing away a piece of inscribed paper	- 5
Reading a book with dirty hands	- 3
Keeping books or inscribed fans in one's bed	- 3

That joking about deities is considered less grave than joking about women means presumably that the former have the power to avenge themselves whereas the latter have not. Curious is the very high penalty for the production of erotica; apparently the idea is that those may kill a man's mind, which is as bad as killing him. As regards the item on the failure of marrying off maids, since a householder stands *in loco parentis* to his servants, he has the duty to find a suitable husband for the maids working in his house as soon as they have reached marriageable age. The last three items are added as a curiosity, to show the reverence of the Chinese for the written word. In many Chinese cities one finds in the streets stone receptacles with the inscription: "Spare the written word". These are erected by pious people who at regular times bury the unwanted scraps of paper deposited there by passers-by.

Special attention is drawn to the repeated warnings in both lists against frivolous songs and theatrical plays. This is typical for that time, for it was in the Yüan period that light literature flourished. We shall now try to describe the background of this phenomenon.

Many Sung officials, loath to serve under often illiterate Mongol and other foreign superiors, resigned from their posts. Chinese literati, educated for an official career, did not apply for appointment, and literary candidates had to give up their study, for between 1284-1313 the Mongols abolished the literary examination-system. As a result of the abnormal situation there soon developed, especially among the younger literati, a tendency to frivolous

amusement. The theatre, heretofore considered as a vulgar amusement of the uneducated crowd, now became one of the favourite pastimes of men of letters. Erudite scholars re-wrote old love-stories for the stage and talented poets composed elegant erotic verse for the librettos. This period witnessed a signal development of the *ch'ü* "chanted verse", a variety of the *tz'ü* equally suited for love-poetry, and which figure prominently on the Chinese stage. The Yüan period was the great age of the Chinese drama.

Two famous plays of that time are the *Hsi-hsiang-chi* "The Story of the West Chamber", and the *Pi-p'a-chi* "The Story of the Lute", which both have love as their main theme. The *Hsi-hsiang-chi* is based on a love-adventure of the T'ang poet Yüan Chên mentioned in Chapter VII. The hero is a young scholar who rents a room in a Buddhist temple in order to devote himself there to his studies. In a villa next door lives a widow with a beautiful daughter, and when robbers menace that neighbourhood the young scholar is able to protect the widow. He falls in love with the daughter but at first she does not respond to his advances. After a complicated courtship she at last grants him a meeting, and in the end the pair are happily united.¹

The *Pi-p'a-chi* is specially interesting because it deals with the emotional conflict of a man who is in love with two wives. The hero is the famous Han scholar Ts'ai Yung (133-192 A.D.) who marries in his home town a beautiful and erudite girl called Chao Wu-niang. Then he has to proceed to the capital to pass the triennial examinations for the civil service, and leaves his aged parents in his wife's care. He comes out first in the examinations and is forced to marry the daughter of a high official, also a charming and learned girl of whom he is very fond. He is made to believe that all is well in his distant home town, but in reality there has been a scarcity there and despite the desperate efforts of his first wife who sells all she has to feed her parents-in-law, they both die. Then Chao Wu-niang decides to go to the capital to look for her husband. She arrives there after untold hardships, earning her living by playing the lute. She happens to meet Ts'ai's second wife without realizing

¹ The *Hsi-hsiang-chi* has been ably translated into English by Henry H. Hart "The West Chamber", Stanford University Press 1936. Of the *Pi-p'a-chi* there is M. Bazin's French abbreviated translation "Le Pi-pa-ki, on Histoire du Luth", Paris 1841, and a complete translation into German by V. Hundhausen, "Die Laute", Peking 1930; a similar theme is treated in the Ch'ing novel *Yü-chiao-li*, translated i.a. into French by St. Julien, "Les Deux Cousines", Paris 1864. Five other Yüan plays about love and courtezans were reproduced in an abbreviated German version by H. Rudelsberger, in his "Altchinesische Liebes-Komödien", Vienna 1923; they are the *Yüan-yang-pei*, *Yü-chung-t'ai*, *Hsieh-t'ien-hsiang*, *Tieh-k'uai-li* and *Huang-liang-mêng*. When consulting these books the reader will have to remember, however, that Chinese plays, even more so than ours, are meant to be heard and seen rather than to be read. But their texts supply good material for the study of sexual and social relationships.

who she is, and the two become great friends. One day Chao Wu-niang's identity is discovered. But everything ends happily, Ts'ai's second wife is deeply moved by Chao Wu-niang's loyalty to her husband's parents, she brings the two together, and the Emperor decides that Ts'ai shall be allowed to have at the same time two principal wives.

The roles of women in these plays were mostly filled by courtezans. Hence from now on acting became part of the routine training of courtezans and prostitutes. A Yüan scholar who is known only by his surname Huang wrote a treatise entitled *Ch'ing-lou-chi* "Records of Green Bowers (i.e. brothels)", which describes the careers of no less than seventy courtezans of that time, many of whom owed their fame to their skill in singing and acting on the stage.¹

The brief biographies of the *Ch'ing-lou-chi* show how varied the careers of those girls were, they mirror the confused and uncertain times. Some singing-girls were bought as concubines by wealthy men, then left them to join a private theatrical troupe owned by another man, and finally married their master or drifted back to their original profession. Others became Taoist nuns and roamed all over the larger cities of the Empire, earning their living now as actresses, then as prostitutes, to end in misery, or in the harem of a Chinese or Mongol official. We also read about male actors, a lowly profession that was badly paid; their wives and daughters often had to earn extra-money as prostitutes.

Both actors and actresses also specialized in the art of story-telling on street corners which now greatly flourished, probably because next to cheap amusement it also afforded opportunities for venting in veiled satire popular resentment against the occupation. This humble art was to play an important role in Chinese literature. It promoted the development of a new literary medium, close to the colloquial. Until then it had been the rule that practically all writing and reciting was done in the traditional, highly-polished literary language. Now, however, since the Mongol officials and their foreign assistants had time nor inclination to master that extremely difficult idiom, oral and written communications between the rulers and the ruled were conducted in a kind of official *lingua franca*, based on simple, everyday colloquial. Next to the playwright, it was the story-teller who perfected this new, vigorous language. And it was the stories told on the streetcorners that laid the foundation of the later Chinese full-length novel, *hsiao-shuo* or "small talk". Till the nineteenth century the authors of novels have in the style of their books maintained

¹ The *Ch'ing-lou-chi* has been reprinted in various collectanea, including HYTS. The best edition, however, is that by Yeh Tê-hui in his *Shuang-mei-ching-an-ts'ung-shu*, mentioned on p. 123 above.

the fiction that they were story-tellers addressing the street. Each chapter ends with "If you want to hear what happened thereafter, listen to the next instalment which will tell you all details", or some similar phrase to that effect.

The life-stories of the prostitutes and courtezans of this time are full of interest; it is hoped that this genre of Chinese literature—which flourished from the T'ang period onward till the first decennia of the twentieth century—will receive more attention on the part of Western translators than it has so far.¹ I here quote from the *Ch'ing-lou-chi* the story of the courtesan Fan Shih-chên.

Fan Shih-chên was a prostitute in the capital, well known for her good looks and her wit. She was patronized by a Chinese official called Chou, who was very fond of her. When Chou had to go to the south, she swore she would rather lose an eye than be unfaithful to him during his absence. But after he had left she was forced to grant her favours to an influential politician. When Chou returned to the capital and came to see her she took one of her hair-needles and gauged out her left eye. This mark of her sincerity moved him so deeply that he never again separated himself from her.

Marco Polo says that in the suburbs of the capital there were lodged no less than 20,000 prostitutes, also intended for foreign visitors; cf. edition by A. C. Moule and P. Pelliot, London 1938, vol. I p. 236.

Literature now often refers to the bound feet of women. The Yüan writer Tao Tsung-i (flourished ca. 1360 A.D.) gives in ch. 10 of his collection of notes entitled *Cho-kêng-lu* a note on foot binding where he states that although till the Hsi-ning (1068–1077) and Yüan-fêng (1078–1085) eras of the preceding Sung dynasty the custom was not yet generally observed, in his own time ladies considered it shameful to have unbound feet.

In ch. 23 of his work Tao Tsung-i also refers to the shoe-fetichism that developed from the adoration of bound feet. He relates how a wealthy and dissolute man used to organize banquets where the guests drunk from the small shoes of the courtezans present. These were called *chin-lien-pei* "Toasts with the Golden Lotus Cups".

The Art of the Bedchamber was still popular, but its principles were not any longer discussed as openly and freely as before. Tao Tsung-i raises a warning voice against this art in ch. 14 of his *Cho-kêng-lu*. He says:

The present people call Art of the Bedchamber depraved and heterodox skills, such as 'making the vital essence (*ch'i*) rise against the stream (of the dorsal column)', and 'to gather (the woman's vital essence) through the battle (of sexual intercourse).

¹ Several semi-historical accounts of T'ang prostitutes are translated in TPL vol. II, i.a. regarding the courtesan Li Wa (p. 154) and Yang Ch'ang (p. 169).

He then quotes the note attached to the list of handbooks of sex in the bibliographical section of the Former Han Dynastic history (see page 70 above), and finally explains the term *fang-chung* "Art of the Bedchamber"—quite wrongly—as just meaning "woman".

In the same chapter T'ao Tsung-i makes some remarks about puberty and menstruation. He says that the ceremony of girls reaching marriageable age and called, as we saw in Chapter II, "reaching the stage of the hairneedles", was also called *shang-t'ou* "to do the hair up", but that this term is also used for indicating the defloration of a young prostitute.

Further on he warns against nine classes of professional women who, if allowed to frequent one's women's quarters, will exercise a nefarious influence on its inmates and cause untold troubles. The pertinent article is entitled *San-ku-liu-p'o*, "The three 'aunts' and the six 'crones'"; and reads:

The three 'aunts' are the Buddhist nun, the Taoist nun, and the female fortune-teller. The six 'crones' are the procuress, the female go-between, the sorceress, the female thief, the female quack, and the midwife. These are indeed like the three punishments and the six harmful cosmic influences. Few are the households which, having admitted one of them, will not be ravaged by fornication and robbery. The men who can guard against those, keeping them away as if they were snakes and scorpions, those men shall come near the method for keeping their household clean.

Buddhist and Taoist nuns were generally suspected of corrupting the morals of the women of the household, and to act as messengers in illicit love-affairs. This point will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter X.

A *ya-p'o* "procuress" is, according to the Sung source *Mêng-liang-lu*, mentioned above, a woman who on behalf of high officials and wealthy people searches for girls to be entered into their households as concubines or maids (*op. cit.* ch. 19, near end of 6th article). The "female go-between", *mei-p'o*, evidently does not refer to the official go-between, indispensable for arranging a bona-fide marriage, but rather to old women who help dissolute men to form illicit relationships. In novels this role is played mostly by crones selling combs, rouge, powder and other articles of ladies' apparel, and who as such have free access to the women's quarters. It is not clear to me why the midwife is mentioned among the undesirables.

Ch. 28 of the *Cho-kêng-lu* further contains an important note on eunuchs. It says:

There are some men who although they are married never obtain offspring; these are called 'natural eunuchs' (*t'ien-yen*). A common expression for them is *huang-mên* 'Imperial Palace' (because it is there that

eunuchs are commonly employed. Transl.) . . . The Classic of Acupuncture of the Yellow Emperor (*Huang-ti-chên-ching*) says: "The Yellow Emperor said: There are men who because of injury to their genitalia have lost the sexual urge, their member will not rise and has become useless. Yet their beard and moustache do not disappear. Why is it that only eunuchs have no beard and moustache? I want to hear the reason of this. Ch'i Po replied: In the case of eunuchs their genitalia are amputated, thereby their seminal duct (*ch'ung-mê*) is cut off and they can not emit semen which then will spread out under the skin of the body. Consequently (the region around) their lips and mouth becomes arid, and no beard or moustache develop. The Yellow Emperor asked: But there are some natural eunuchs who although they have not undergone that mutilation yet do not have beard or moustache. Why is this so? Ch'i Po answered: That is because Heaven did not give them a sufficient sexual urge. Hence their seminal duct is not developed, and neither their genitalia. They have *ch'i* but not semen. Thus the region around their mouth and lips is arid, and beard and moustache will not grow there.

The text quoted is written, as so many old medical and sexological books, in the form of a dialogue between the Yellow Emperor and one of his teachers or associates, in this case Ch'i Po, the mythical inventor of the art of healing.

The operation performed on eunuchs was a crude one, both penis and scrotum being removed in one cut with a sharp knife. Dr. Matignon gives a detailed description of the operation as it was regularly done in Peking ca. 1890, by an expert living near the Palace Gate. His profession was hereditary, and he asked a high fee, which could be paid in instalments later when the persons operated upon had obtained a position in the Palace. For more information, also on the treatment of the after-effects of the operation, the reader is referred to Dr. Matignon's book, which also gives a photograph of the scar left. It may be safely assumed that the method used in early times did not differ much from the one described. Dr. Matignon adds that fatal effects were comparatively rare, he places the percentage of persons dying as a result at 3-6%. But a large number of the eunuchs suffered from chronic incontinence of the bladder and other ailments.¹

Such chronic ailments, together with their sense of physical inferiority, explains in part the peculiar character of the eunuchs as we know it from Chinese history and literature. They were as a rule haughty and extremely suspicious by nature, quick to take offense and much given to moods. They were mostly greedy for the luxuries of life, and many of them were notorious gluttons, although they do not seem to have been great drinkers. Their disability had

¹ Matignon, *op. cit.*, ch. "Les Eunuques du Palais Impérial de Pékin" Also: G. Carter Stent, "Chinese Eunuchs", article in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, N. China Branch*, no. XI, 1877.

many compensations, and they seem on the whole to have accepted their lot rather philosophically. Although the majority of eunuchs consisted of boys who had been castrated by their parents when still young, for presentation to the Palace, not a few adults had themselves mutilated on their own initiative. For a eunuch could be sure to obtain an easy and lucrative position in the Imperial Palace or a princely mansion. Once established they usually took a wife to look after them, and adopted sons to continue their family. Moreover, the eunuchs formed together a compactly organized group, the members of which assisted each other and promoted each other's interests.

The eunuchs have played an important role all through Chinese history; they formed an inner circle inside the Imperial Palace which often acquired great influence in affairs of state. Their free access to the Imperial seraglio made them conversant with all the gossip and intrigue that went on among the Palace women, and thereby they were accurately informed about the Emperor's moods, foibles and preferences. The eunuchs were indeed much closer to him than the ministers of state and other high officials who as a rule saw the Emperor only during audiences or important ceremonies. Hence the Emperor often entrusted eunuchs with confidential missions, and showed them all important state papers. The eunuchs knew very well how to utilize their privileged position for the furtherance of their private interests; if they could not influence the Emperor directly, they did so through the intermediary of the Empress and the other women of the seraglio. Often the eunuchs became so powerful that they could usurp the direction of affairs of state, mostly with disastrous consequences for the country, and in the end also for themselves. For although they knew all intimate Palace affairs, they had only second-hand knowledge of what went on in the provinces, and of conditions beyond the frontiers. Throughout the ages they have formed a hard core of chauvinism and narrow reactionary tendencies within the Palace, and although some eunuchs individually promoted public welfare, and others proved capable leaders—the famous Ming naval expeditions to the South Seas in 1405 were led by a eunuch—as an institution they were a source of evil and their influence must be defined as greatly detrimental to Chinese politics and economy.

The mighty Mongol rule that had seemed to be instituted for ever, soon began to weaken. Political power based solely on military means and devoid of a cultural backing can not absorb the shocks of reverses, and after their initial successes the Mongols received many setbacks. Nearly invincible when fighting in the steppes of north and central Asia and in the N. Chinese

plains, they could not support the hot and humid climate of southern regions and were totally unsuited for naval warfare. Their armies were defeated in Annam and Indo-China, their colossal naval campaign against Japan failed, and also their expeditions to Indonesia were in the end unsuccessful. These reverses taught the Mongols that they had much to learn from the Chinese, and they began to adopt a more lenient attitude, offering better employment to Chinese scholar-officials. Now some capable Chinese entered their service, and a few of those became well known by their literary and artistic achievements, although Chinese historians frown at their lack of patriotism.

The foremost scholar-artist of that time was Chao Mêng-fu (1254-1322), a great calligrapher, painter and art-collector. Nearly as famous is his principal wife, the Lady Kuan (Kuan Tao-shêng, 1262-1319). Since she was an only child, her father had doted on her, and given her an excellent literary education. She was an original poetess, and expert in the painting of bamboo. She married Chao Mêng-fu when she was 27, and her husband occupied then already a high official position in the capital. Tradition paints their marriage as a happy one, both husband and wife were honoured by the Mongol court and received noble rank. Of the Lady Kuan's literary work little has been preserved. Famous is her *Wo-nung-tz'ü* "Poem of you and me", a witty piece which she wrote when she had quarrelled with her husband about a new concubine he wanted to take. It says:

Between you and me
 There is far too much emotion
 And that causes our red-hot quarrels.
 Now take a lump of clay
 And mould it into a semblance of you,
 And again take a lump
 And make it into an image of me.
 Then smash the two and mix the broken pieces
 And again make from them an image of you
 And an image of me.
 Then in my clay there is something of you,
 And in yours something of me—
 Alive we'll sleep under the same quilt,
 And dead we'll share the same coffin.

According to later tradition Chao Mêng-fu pursued many loves, and excelled in the painting of erotic pictures. In the next chapter will be quoted a description of a series of 36 postures painted by him, as found in an erotic novel of the Ming period.

In the second half of the Yüan dynasty there were also some Mongols who had acquired a knowledge of Chinese culture and engaged in literary pursuits. There has been preserved a small medical work on hygienic living, written by a court-physician called Hu-szû-hui, who in 1330 presented it to the Throne. The book is entitled *Yün-shan-chêng-yao* "Important Tenets of Drinking and Eating", and the famous scholar-official Yü Chi (1272-1348) added a preface to it. Since it is written in a clear and simple style and gives detailed information on the dietary properties of vegetable and animal food, it became a popular vademecum. In 1456 it was reprinted with a preface by the 7th Ming Emperor Tai-tsung.

In the introductory part it says:

Indeed those men of high antiquity who knew Tao modelled their life on the harmony of *yin* and *yang*, and lived in accordance with the rhythm of nature. In food and drink they observed moderation, their daily life was regular and they did not wantonly over-exert themselves. Therefore they lived long. But the people of the present age are different, their daily life is irregular, they do not know what to avoid in food and drink, and they do not observe moderation. They give themselves over to dissipation, indulge in rich and appetizing food, they can not keep to the Golden Mean and they can not be satisfied with what they have. Therefore the greater part of them come to grief before they are fifty.

Now the Way of quiet enjoyment of life lies in the nurturing of body and soul. And this way of nurturing is no other than to keep to the Golden Mean. The Golden Mean consists of neither too much nor too little. The ailments originating from sexual relations will occur in all the four seasons, they are caused by over-indulgence and by a man forcing himself to the sexual act when his nature does not demand it. Therefore those who know how to nurture their nature do not make the mistake of over-indulgence, and thus they can keep and protect their True Origin (i.e. their semen).

(SPTK edition, ch. I, page 14b)

A little farther Hu-szû-hui warns against exercising the sexual act when one is troubled by congestion in the eyes (ibid. page 16a), and especially when one is intoxicated (ibid. page 25a). On page 17b he remarks: "Avoid lewdness as you would being hit by arrows, and shun draughts as you would shun getting involved in a law-suit".

This book also contains explicit instructions regarding pre-natal care. On the whole these are derived from the old handbooks of sex: a pregnant woman should avoid over-exertion, quarreling and all other excitement, keep to a bland diet, look only at beautiful things, etc. It also evinces the writer's common sense in such simple instructions as: "To spit far is better than to spit near, but best of all is to refrain from expectorating altogether" (page

16b), and: "It is better to brush one's teeth in the evening than to do it in the morning, this will prevent dental trouble" (page 17a).

Khubilai Khan and the Mongol rulers who succeeded him in China were devotees of Lamaism. At the time this Vajrayānic form of Northern Buddhism (Mahāyāna), introduced from India into Tibet and thence to Mongolia, flourished greatly among the Mongols, especially the cult of the Female Energy. Khubilai surrounded himself with Tantric adepts, he was endowed with the Kāla-cakra-maṇḍala by the famous Master 'Phags-pa, and received the investiture of World Monarch according to the Tantric ceremony Hevajra-vaśitā.¹ In Lamaist iconography most deities are represented in sexual congress with their female counterparts, a position known as that of the "Progenitors", Tibetan *yab-yum*. Tantric adepts were supposed to attain salvation by practising themselves this divine pairing, through sexual intercourse with female partners. This subject will be treated in greater detail in Appendix I of the present volume. The above brief remarks may suffice as introduction to the following description of those sexual rites as practised at the Mongol court, and the Chinese reactions to them.

The loyal Sung scholar Chêng Szû-hsiao (flourished ca. 1290) relates in his *Hsin-shih*² that in Peking there was erected within the confines of the Chên-kuo Temple a Fo-mu-tien "Buddha-mother Hall". In this hall stood a number of large statues of Lamaist deities holding their female counterparts in sexual embrace. Chêng gives a vivid description of horrifying sexual orgies and sanguinary sacrifices of women that took place there. But when reading his account one must keep in mind that Chêng Szû-hsiao hated and despised the Mongol conquerors and that he probably exaggerated. Moreover, he was evidently completely ignorant of Lamaism, and thought that statues of the bull-headed deity Yamāntaka and other gods with animal heads clasping their naked spouses in their arms signified that bestiality was practised during those rites. Yet his account proves clearly that Tantrism prospered under the Mongol rulers.

The dynastic history of the Mongol period, the *Yüan-shih*, gives in ch. 205 in the biography of the Emperor's favourite Ha-ma a description of the Tantric

¹ For the Kāla-cakra ceremony see G. N. Roerich's translation of the Tibetan annals Deb-ther Sion-po, "The Blue Annals" (Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal Monograph Series no. VII, Calcutta 1949), vol. II, page 702. For the Hevajra ceremony see P. H. Pott's informative study "Yoga en Yantra", Leyden 1946, page 74, where more pertaining literature is referred to.

² Cf. *Hsin-shih*, section Ta-i-lüeh-hsü, Peking reprint of 1936, pp. 129-130.

rituals performed in the palace, which corroborates Chêng Szû-hsiao's remarks. There it is said:

He (i.e. Ha-ma) also presented to the Emperor (i.e. Hui-tsung, 1333-1367 A.D.) the Tibetan monk Ka-lin-chên, who was an expert in the secret (Tantric) ritual. That monk said to the Emperor: 'Your Majesty rules over all in the Empire, and owns all riches within the four seas. But Your Majesty should not think of this life only. Man's life is brief, therefore this secret method of the Supreme Joy (that ensures longevity) should be practised'. The Emperor thereupon practised this method, which is called 'Discipline in Pairs'. It is also called *yen-t'ieh-êh*,¹ and "secret". All these practices refer to the Art of the Bedchamber. The Emperor then summoned Indian monks to direct those ceremonies, and conferred upon a Tibetan monk the title of Ta-yüan-kuo-shih 'Master of the Great Yüan Empire'. They all took girls of good families, some four, some three, for these disciplines and called that 'to sacrifice' (*kung-yang*). Then the Emperor daily engaged in these practices, assembling for the purpose great numbers of women and girls, and found his joy only in this dissolute pleasure. He also selected a number from among his concubines and made them perform the dance of the Sixteen Dākini and the Eight Males.² The brothers of the Emperor and those men who are called 'Companions'³ all engaged in front of the Emperor in these lewd embraces, men and women being naked. The hall where these things took place was called *Chieh-chi-wu-kai*, which means in Chinese 'Everything without obstacle'.⁴ Ruler and statesmen thus displayed their lewdness, and the crowd of monks went in and out the Palace, and were allowed to do anything they liked.

Anticipating our discussion of the Ming period, it may be added here already that the veneration of the Tantric "double deities" was taken over by the Chinese and continued for several centuries after the fall of the Yüan dynasty. The Ming scholar T'ien I-hêng (flourished ca. 1570) included in ch. 28 of his

¹ H. Franke and R. Stein have proposed Mongol readings for these transcriptions in their reviews of ECP.

² *Shih-liu-t'ien-mo* "the sixteen Heavenly Devils". The Tantric pantheon has many sets of sixteen, but this particular group is not mentioned. Neither could I trace the term *pa-lang* "eight males". I suppose that the 16 represented Tantric she-devils, who had intercourse with men representing their male companions, one pair of women with one man.

The *Yüan-shih-yeh-ting-chi* "Record of the Women's Apartments of the Yüan Rulers", by the 14th century scholar T'ao Tsung-i, gives the additional information that the sixteen girls who executed this dance had their hair plaited in a number of long tresses, wore crowns made of ivory and long red robes, tasseled and braided with gold, while they held in their hands cups made of human skulls (*kapāla*). Whereas this description stresses the Tantric character of the dance, it gives no information about the *pa-lang*.

³ The text has *i-na*, probably a transcription of Mongol *ainak*.

⁴ This term suggests a connection with the god Ganeśa who in the Mantrayāna is described especially as *vināyaka*, "remover of obstacles".

collection of miscellaneous notes entitled *Liu-ch'ing-jih-cha* an article *Shuang-hsiu-fa* "Disciplines in Pairs", where he quotes the substance of the passage in Hama's biography translated above. He then says: "The perverted sexual disciplines nowadays practised by married couples originated from this". This allegation is of course entirely unwarranted. We have seen in the preceding chapters that the Art of the Bedchamber was a purely Chinese conception, and we shall try to prove in Appendix I that, far from being modelled after Indian prototypes, it was this Chinese Art of the Bedchamber that gave rise to the sexual disciplines of Tantrism.

In ch. 27 of the *Liu-ch'ing-jih-cha*, under the heading *Fo-ya* "Buddha's Tooth", T'ien I-hêng describes Tantric statues in the Ta-shan-tien in the Ming Imperial Palace. He states that in 1536 the scholar Hsia Yen (1482-1548) petitioned the Throne to have those statues destroyed. T'ien then continues: "Those obscene statues of men and women are called 'Joyful Buddhas'. It is said that these were used to instruct the Crown Prince. For since he was growing up in the seclusion of the Palace, it was feared that he would remain ignorant of sexual matters".

It would seem that Hsia Yen's petition was not heeded, for at the end of the Ming dynasty those statues still played an important role in Palace ceremonies. This is attested by the Ming scholar Shên Tê-fu (1578-1642) in his *Pi-chou-chai-yü-t'an*. He says:

I have seen in the Palace 'Joyful Buddhas' which are said to have been sent as tribute by foreign countries. Others say that these statues are remnants of the Mongol rule. They represent pairs of Buddhas, richly adorned, who embrace each other with their sexual organs linked together. Some statues have movable genitalia, all plainly visible. The Head of the Eunuchs informed me that when a Prince marries the couple is first led into this hall. After they have knelt and worshipped, both bride and groom must feel the genitals of the statues with their fingers, in order thus to learn without words the method of the sexual union. Only after this ceremony has been completed may they proceed to drink the wedding-cup. The reason is that it is feared that such august persons may be ignorant of the various methods of sexual intercourse.

(text reprinted in HYTS).

Thus we find here the Tantric statues used for exactly the same purpose as the illustrations of the old handbooks of sex, namely for instruction in the methods of sexual intercourse.

While the Mongol Emperor studied in his palace in Peking the arcana of Tantric sexual mysticism, Chinese revolt had started already in the south and east. It began with uncoordinated uprisings led by patriots and soldiers of fortune, but when the Mongols failed to take decisive measures, the revolt

spread quickly under the leadership of Chinese generals. The Mongol government, torn by internal strife, seemed to have lost its will to rule, and its soldiers, weakened by their easy and luxurious life, had lost their former martial prowess. Everywhere the population started to kill or chase away the hated Mongol officials and their foreign henchmen. The Chinese troops marched north and occupied Peking, the last Mongol Emperor fled. In 1368 the general Chu Yüan-chang founded the Ming dynasty, with Nanking as its capital.

CHAPTER TEN

MING DYNASTY

1368-1644

As first Emperor of the Ming dynasty, General Chu Yüan-chang assumed the reign-title of Hung-wu "Superabundant Military Prestige". During the greater part of his reign he was indeed occupied with bringing the entire country under his control, while at the same time he ensured that the domains on the periphery such as Mongolia, Manchuria and Korea recognized Chinese suzerainty. These military tasks he performed well, and at the end of his reign the Chinese Empire covered an area even larger than that of the T'ang period.

The Emperor also reorganized the administration, taking T'ang and Han institutions as model. He re-established the traditional system of the literary examinations—discontinued under the Mongol occupation—and thereby recruited the personnel needed for the colossal Imperial civil service. Thus he created a compact, highly centralized system of government, manned chiefly by Confucianist scholar-officials, a powerful bureaucracy that guaranteed a well-ordered, efficient administration.

However, this centralized bureaucracy differed in many respects from that of the T'ang and Sung periods. The preceding period of military occupation had exercised a coarsening influence. The arrogant severity of the Mongol officials had left a mark on the younger Chinese literati, and now that they themselves were in power they imitated the Mongol authoritarian style. The Emperor himself was first and foremost a military man, of humble descent and without literary education, and he had to deal with chiefly military problems. He therefore encouraged strict rule and swift and severe justice and did not curb the growing ascendancy of the bureaucracy over the people. This promoted in all ranks of the administration an arrogant attitude of the officials towards those entrusted to their care, an attitude that forcibly struck the foreign observers who visited China in that period.

Although the Emperor himself had some sympathy for Buddhism, for the state he adopted the Neo-Confucianism of the Sung period as the only officially recognized creed. Many orthodox Confucianists who had been chafing under the flourishing of state-protected Buddhism during the Mongol period, now asserted themselves. One of them, called Wu Hai, even presented to the

authorities a treatise entitled *Shu-huo* "The Disasters caused by (un-orthodox) Writings", in which he recommended that all the books of ancient non-Confucianist philosophers as Yang Chu and Mo Ti,¹ and all Buddhist and Taoist books be destroyed. His extremist advice was not heeded, but the authorities did come to view non-Confucianist thought with suspicion, and at various times exercised censorship and took measures for thought-control. At first this control bore a rather mild character, but it gradually tightened, and in the later years of the Ming period often became oppressive.

Partly as a reaction to the contempt which the Mongols had displayed for Chinese culture, and partly because of the ardent nationalism of a newly liberated nation, there now developed an exaggerated veneration for the national heritage. This occasioned a signal revival of all arts, but at the same time a tendency to stifle independent, critical thought. It was considered as un-patriotic to express doubt on the authenticity of Chu Hsi's Neo-Confucianist interpretation of the Classics, or on the high antiquity of Confucianist customs and moral standards. A wave of—not seldom amateurish—enthusiasm for old literature, archeology and epigraphy went through the ranks of the scholar-officials, and all who did not join in it were labelled as un-Chinese—now an invective even worse than during the preceding centuries.

The Ming period was an age of unprecedented flourishing of Chinese culture, but it carried in it the seeds of isolationist and stagnatory tendencies that would fully grow under the succeeding Ch'ing dynasty, and which in the long run had a detrimental influence on the further evolution of Chinese culture in general.

For a few centuries, however, the great qualities of Ming culture prevailed. It was an age of living in grand style. The Ming people were eminent architects, there arose magnificent palaces, mansions and villas, furnished with impressive furniture, solid but of a faultless quality of design that in its simple grandeur was never again equalled. Talented artists created new styles in painting and calligraphy, their works decorated the stately mansions of the rich as well as the simple but tastefully arranged libraries of humble scholars. The art of elegant living developed into a veritable cult, and numerous books on the amenities of life and their enjoyment were written.

Patronized by the government, the Confucianist principles began to work through to the daily life of the people. The separation of the sexes and the seclusion of women began now to be practised in earnest.

This impression obtained from contemporaneous Chinese literature is confirmed by the observations of Western visitors to China of that time. The

¹ Yang Chu and Mo Ti were the opponents of Mencius (371–289 B.C.), the great exponent of Confucianism.

Portuguese missionary Gaspar da Cruz who in 1556 visited Canton—which he calls Cantam—was struck by the fact that one saw no decent women about in the streets. He says: "They commonly keep themselves close, so that through all the city of Cantam, there appeareth not a woman, but some light housewives and base women. And when they go abroad they are not seen, for they go in close chairs (whereof we speak before); neither when anybody cometh into the house doth he see them, except for curiosity they chance under the door-cloth to look on them that come in when they are foreigners".¹ And another missionary, Martin de Rada, who visited South China a few years later, says: "The women are very secluded and virtuous, and it was a very rare thing for us to see a woman in the cities and large towns, unless it was an old crone. Only in the villages, where it seemed that there was more simplicity, the women were more often to be seen, and even working in the fields. They are accustomed since babyhood to bind and cramp the feet in such a way that they deform them, leaving all the toes below the great toe twisted underneath".² The last remark proves how widely spread the custom of footbinding was in the latter half of the Ming period.

It is not without interest to hear what the famous missionary Matteo Ricci (1583–1610) says about Chinese wives and concubines: "Rites and ceremonies of betrothal are also numerous. These people usually marry at an early age, and they do not favor a great difference in the ages of those being married. Marriage contracts are arranged by the parents of both parties but without the consent of those to be married, though at times they may be consulted. Those who belong to the upper social classes, marry within their class and equal family rating in the class is required for legitimate marriage. All men are free to have concubines, and class or fortune means nothing in their selection, as the only standard of preference is physical beauty. These concubines may be purchased for a hundred pieces of gold and at times for much less. Among the lower classes wives are bought and sold for silver and as often as a man may wish. The King (i.e. the Emperor. v. G.) and his sons select their wives for their beauty only, with no regard for nobility of race. The women of the aristocracy do not aspire to royal marriage because the wives of the King have no special standing in society and being confined to the palace they can never see their own people. Moreover since the selection for consubial consort from among the royal wives is left to certain magistrates appointed for that purpose, comparatively few are chosen from the many

¹ Cf. C. R. Boxer, "South China in the Sixteenth Century" (Hakluyt Society, 2nd series no. CVI), London 1953, pages 149–150.

² C. R. Boxer, *op. cit.*, pages 282–283.

available".¹ The remark about the "wives of the King" having no special standing in society applies of course only to the nameless lower women in the Imperial seraglio.

The chastity of women became a veritable cult, the remarrying of widows was frowned upon, and divorce was considered a disgrace for a woman, whatever the reason. Therefore divorce by mutual consent was practised less than in the preceding period. The husband could still unilaterally repudiate his wife on seven grounds, namely (1) sterility (2) lewdness (3) disobedience to her parents-in-law (4) loquacity (5) stealing (6) jealousy and (7) a repulsive disease. These grounds were valid for all classes, except the first which did not operate in the case of the ruler and the princes. Further, a wife could not be repudiated *first* if she had mourned the three-year period for her parents-in-law, *second* if during her married life her husband had risen from poverty to wealth, and *third* if she could prove to have no relatives left who could give her shelter.

Whereas men in general were interested in Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism alike, women favoured nearly exclusively Buddhism. The Buddhist creed of universal love and compassion, preaching equality of all beings, answered women's spiritual needs, while the dazzling ceremonies centring round beautiful female deities like the compassionate Goddess Kuan-yin who helps in distress and grants children to the childless, lent colour to their rather monotonous daily life. Very popular among women was the sect of the Pure Land, which taught that Paradise, presided over by Amitābha, the Buddha of Boundless Light, can be entered by anyone who utters his name in sincere devotion. "O-mi-t'o-fo", the Chinese version of the name Amitābha, became the favourite exclamation of astonishment or delight used by ladies. Men consulted for guidance in the routine problems of daily life by preference Taoist priests; it was they who gave advice about lucky sites for building a house, and auspicious dates for all minor and major undertakings. But Buddhist nuns who by virtue of their sex had free access to the women's quarters, were the favourite counsellors of the ladies of the household. Buddhist nuns officiated at intimate household ceremonies as for instance prayer-meetings for the recovery of a sick child, or for curing sterility; they gave the ladies of the household advice in personal problems, acted as self-styled doctors and wonder-workers for feminine diseases, and were also employed in the women's quarters on a more permanent basis as teachers of the young girls in reading and writing, and feminine skills.

Public opinion regarded nuns and nunneries with disfavour, and Ming

¹ Cf. "China in the Sixteenth Century, the Journals of Matthew Ricci", translated from the Latin by Louis J. Gallagher S. J., New York 1953, page 95.

novels and short-stories paint their alleged iniquities in lurid colours. Nuns were suspected of having entered religion only to practise unnatural vices, and nunneries were described as haunts of secret debauch.¹ It was also commonly alleged that nuns when visiting private households procured for the women love philtres and other drugs, and acted as go-betweens for illicit relationships with outside men. We saw on p. 254 above that a Yüan writer counsels to keep nuns far from one's household. Further, it was suspected that ladies visited nunneries not so much to offer prayers or for attending religious ceremonies, as to have an opportunity for going outside in their best dresses and finery in order to attract the attention of other men.

It is true that comparatively few girls and women entered religion because of a sincere desire for a life of devotion. In many cases girls were destined by their parents to become nuns without being consulted, or even before they were born. Often parents would make a vow that an unborn daughter would become a nun, in order to avert a threatening calamity, or they would do so when a daughter was dangerously ill in order to ensure her recovery. The monastery also offered refuge to girls who abhorred the idea of having to marry a man they had never seen, and to those wives or concubines who wanted to escape from a cruel husband or a tyrannical mother-in-law. And finally also to women with sapphic inclinations, and to lewd women who hoped to find in the monastery a safe place to conduct illicit relations with men without the necessity of registering themselves officially as prostitutes. Since the nuns were recruited from such varied classes it goes without saying that if the abbess was not a woman of strong personality, moral discipline in the monastery tended to become lax.

On the other hand it must be remembered that public opinion in old China was mainly formulated by men, and according to the principles of dual morality. Further, the idea alone that women abandoned their sacred duty of propagating the family and went to live in self-contained communities where they were not subject to the control of their male relatives, was abhorrent to the Confucianists. And the writers of Ming novels and short-stories were mostly Confucianist literati, who had *ipso facto* a prejudice against everything Buddhist. Buddhist monks and nuns were their favourite black sheep. Therefore, when reading this kind of literature one should guard against making

¹ A typical example is the short-story "The Mandarin Duck Girdle", from the Ming collection *Hsing-shih-hêng-yen*, publ. 1627 by the prolific writer Fêng Mêng-lung. Translated by H. Acton and Lee Yi-hsieh, in their book "Four Cautionary Tales", London 1947; of this book there exists also a special, illustrated edition entitled "Glue and Lacquer" but the plates, though of good artistic quality, give a completely wrong idea of Chinese costumes, customs and interiors.

generalizations, and take the scathing denouncements of the moral turpitude of nuns with a generous dosis of salt.

In the privacy of the bedroom the principles of the handbooks of sex were still practised, but the handbooks themselves did not any longer circulate as freely as before. It was now felt that this genre of literature, useful though it was, did not lend itself to public discussion. Whereas, as we saw in the above, the bibliographical section of the Sung dynastic history still mentions the handbooks of sex, that of the Ming dynasty does not list a single one, neither under the Taoist books (which is a very meagre section anyway), nor under medical literature. As a matter of course those bibliographical accounts should by no means be taken as representative of the literature that actually circulated during a given period, but they do indicate which books had official sanction, and which not. And the handbooks of sex, especially those of a Taoist character, now belonged to the latter category.

Numerous references in Ming literature prove that although the handbooks of sex were less popular than before, their principles still pervaded sexual life. In the following pages we shall quote many of those references. First attention is drawn to a document that stresses the importance of the Art of the Bedchamber, a fragment of "Family Instructions" of ca. 1550 A.D.

According to an old Chinese custom, a householder will in the eve of his life often place on record the wisdom of his riper years, for the guidance and instruction of his children. Although such documents, usually referred to as *chia-hsün* "Family Instructions", are primarily meant for the writer's own family only, several of them have become famous in Chinese literature. I mention the *Yen-shih-chia-hsün* written by Yen Chih-t'ui (531-591 A.D.), the *Chih-chia-ko-yen* by the Confucianist scholar Chu Yung-ch'un (1617-1689), and the *Chia-hsün* by the famous statesman and general Tsêng Kuo-fan (1811-1872). However, besides those orthodox *chia-hsün*, householders also sometimes drew up secret documents containing their ideas on the sexual life of the family. Those were kept carefully locked away and probably only shown to sons when they were about to get married. By a fortunate accident this fragment of one of such books has been preserved.

Since it is written in indifferent style, one concludes that the author was a well-to-do landowner or a wealthy merchant without special literary training. However, he must have been a man of shrewd psychological insight and an original thinker who was specially concerned over the well-being and protection of women. The four articles preserved read:

(A) [The first four characters are missing; probably they read: "Wives and concubines are daily occupied with"] the control of all trifling household chores (lit.: 'rice and salt'). Except for attending to their hairdress and their face-powder and rouge, and engaging in music and card-games, they really have nothing to gladden their hearts but sexual intercourse. Therefore it is the duty of every enlightened householder to acquire a thorough knowledge of the Art of the Bedchamber, so that he can give complete satisfaction to his womenfolk every-time he copulates with one of them and . . . (rest missing).

(B) "East of the street lives a young and vigorous man of imposing mien; his women quarrel from morning till night and do not heed him. West of the street lives a greybeard who walks with a stoop; his women do their utmost to serve him obediently. How can this be explained? The answer is that the latter knows the subtle secrets of the Art of the Bedchamber, while the former is ignorant of it.

(C) "Recently I heard about a certain official who took unto him a new concubine. He locked himself in with her behind double doors and did not appear for three days. All his wives and concubines were highly incensed at his behaviour. This indeed is the wrong way (of introducing a new woman into the household). The right method is for the man to control his desire and, for the time being not approaching the newcomer, concentrate his attention on the others. Everytime he has sexual intercourse with his other women, he should make the newcomer stand at attention by the side of the ivory couch. Then, after four or five nights of this, he may for the first time copulate with the newcomer, but only with his principal wife and the other concubines present. This is the fundamental principle of harmony and happiness in one's women's quarters.

(D) "No human being is entirely without shortcomings. How then could one expect his women to be without them? If one of them makes a mistake she should be admonished. And if she then still does not correct herself, she should receive corporal punishment by being caned. But this punishment has its proper rules and limits. The correct way is to have the woman lie face down on a bench, loosen her trousers, and administer five or six strokes on her buttocks with the cane, never hitting below the back of the thighs nor above the coccyx. Occasionally, however, there are men who when administering punishment to a concubine will strip her naked and bind her to a pillar with ropes and whip her indiscriminately till the flesh bursts and she is covered with blood. This will not only harm the woman but also the man himself, and thus one's women's quarters are degraded to a torture chamber as that of the tribunal. This should by all means be avoided".

(text ECP, vol. II, folio 90).

A few comments on this document will not be out of place. The first article stresses that since women pass the greater part of their time inside the house they have a rather monotonous life. Their only recreation consists of engaging together in chamber music and playing chess, dominos and various card games,

all of which were very popular during the Ming period. Therefore their sexual life is much more important to them than to their master who has the manifold interests of his life outside, such as his work, his relations with his friends etc. This is, as far as I know, for that period a new thought. Other writers usually take the secluded and monotonous life of women for granted.

The second article points out that a man's skill in the sexual act means more to most women than his youth or charm. Also that sexual frustration will make women quarrelsome and difficult to handle. Although similar ideas are found in the handbooks of sex, there they are not formulated as clearly as here.

The third article proves the writer's psychological acumen. A man should prevent his women from suspecting that a newly acquired concubine has secret charms which might enable her to oust the others from their master's affection. Therefore the householder should make it clear from the very beginning that the other women take precedence over the newcomer, and when he deflowers her the others should be present so that they can see for themselves that she has nothing which they lack.

The last article shows that the writer was much interested in the welfare of women. Corporal punishment should be administered with moderation, on a place of the body where it can not do much harm, and the woman should be only partly undressed. One feels tempted to interpret the line about excessive beating of completely stripped women harming the man himself as much as his victims, as meaning that this may rouse sadistic tendencies in the man. But this would doubtless be a forced interpretation. The author means rather that a man will damage his reputation by having enacted in his household scenes which resemble the questioning of criminals under torture in the tribunal. Yet he may also have subconsciously felt the danger of rousing dormant sadistic instincts.

This document is of great value for the study of Chinese manners and morals during the Ming period. One can only hope that some day the complete text of such a treatise will become available.

Some new handbooks of sex were written. Although they were allowed a limited circulation during the Ming period, they fell victim to the strict censorship of the succeeding Ch'ing dynasty. It is again in Japan that a few of these Ming texts have survived.

The first Ming handbook to be discussed here is the *Su-nü-miao-lun* "Admirable Discourses of the Plain Girl".

It survives in two versions. First, an illustrated blockprint which appeared during the Bun-roku era (1592-1596). This print bears the subtitle *Ningen-rakugi* "The Joys of Man", and also *Kōso-myōron* "Admirable Discourses of the

Yellow Emperor and the Plain Girl". The text, a Japanese adaptation of the Chinese original, is preceded by a number of small-sized erotic pictures based on the illustrations of Ming erotic novels; for more details see K. Shibui, *Genroku-kohanga-shūei*, vol. II, Tōkyō 1928. Second, a Japanese manuscript copy of the Chinese text only, dating from ca. 1880. It consists of 42 pages, each having 10 columns of 21 characters.

This treatise consists of fragments from such older handbooks as the *Su-nü-ching*, *Tung-hsüan-tzū* etc., re-written and arranged so as to form one continuous argument, here and there supplemented by the compiler's own observations. The entire text is written in the traditional form of a dialogue between Huang-ti, the Yellow Emperor, and Su-nü, the Plain Girl. The style is typical for mediocre literary productions of the Ming period, prolix and repetitious but, on the whole, easy to read. It is a practical handbook of neither Confucianist nor Taoist colouring; although stressing the importance of conserving the semen and the therapeutic properties of the sexual act, in the same manner as the ancient handbooks of sex, it does not treat of Taoist sexual alchemy and related subjects. This is, as far as I know, the most complete bona-fide handbook of sex of the Ming period that has been preserved. Some day it should be translated in its entirety.*

The writer of the preface, dated 1566 A.D., signs himself with the penname *Chai-hung-lou chu-jên* "Master of the Gathering-Red Pavilion". He states that the author of the treatise is unknown, but that some attribute it to the "Taoist of the Mao Mountain". This mountain, located in Kiangsu Province, was during the Han period already famous as an abode of Taoist adepts. The editor of the text calls himself *Hung-tu Ch'üan-t'ien-chên*, "Mr. Completing Heaven's Truth, from Nanking". At the end there is a colophon dated the 11th lunar month of 1556, and signed by "the Master of the Western Garden, in the Tower of Warm Fragrance". This colophon is written in the style called *chü-chü* "assembling phrases", viz. the peculiarly Chinese device of composing an essay by piecing together various isolated phrases from well-known literary works.¹

Below we shall review its content, dwelling only on such passages as contain data not found in the older handbooks.

* The *Su-nü miao-lun* is now available in a complete English translation: Wile (1992: 122-33), cited in the Introduction. [PRG]

¹ The same device is followed in the preface to the late-Ming erotic album *Hua-yüing-chün-chên* (cf. ECP vol. I, p. 209) which is entirely composed of quotations from the Confucianist Classics. It seems that the editors of pornographic literature took special pleasure in using sacred Confucianist and Buddhist texts for obscene descriptions. One notices the same tendency in Japan where a pornographic late-Ming novelette entitled *Ch'ih-p'o-tzū-chuan* "Biography of a Foolish Woman" was reprinted in 1891 in Kyōto with antique movable type, preserved in the Buddhist temple Enkō-ji and there used for printing the Buddhist holy books. Combining the obscene with the holy seems to be an adolescent trait, yet one could hardly call Chinese or Japanese civilization adolescent. Doubtless sexologists will be able to give the correct explanation of this phenomenon.

The first five sections treat the following subjects: I. *Origin and Beginnings*, discussing the significance and benefits of the sexual act. II. *The Nine Postures*, an enlarged and embellished version of the Nine Positions described in Section XII of the *I-hsin-fang*. III. *Shallow and Deep Thrusts*, largely based on what the ancient handbooks have to say on this technique, including a list of technical terms for the various parts of the feminine genitalia. IV. *The Five Desires and the Five Afflictions*, based on Sections VII and VIII of the *I-hsin-fang* quotations, and section XVIII of the same source. V. *The Obtaining of Children*, again based upon the pertinent passages in the older handbooks.

Section VI, entitled *On the Varying Size of the Male Member* gives some new data. It says:

The Emperor asked: Why do the Precious Instruments of most men differ in size and hardness? The Plain Girl replied: Because men, just as they are born with different faces, also have different penises. Everything in a man is just as nature has equipped him. This is why some short men have long penises and some tall men have short ones; it is why some meager and weak men have big and long penises, and some tall and fat men have only thin and weak ones.

The Emperor asked: Do the variation in shape and hardness of the "Boy" influence the woman who comes from there? The Plain Girl replied: The shape and degree of hardness with which nature adorns a man are superficial qualities. What is important is the skill with which the man uses these qualities to please a woman during coition. If a man knows that a woman married him out of love and affection, and if he convinces her that he is truly in love with her, the woman will not care whether his penis is long or short, thick or thin.

The Emperor asked: How do hard and soft penises differ from one another? The Plain Girl replied: A long penis is often worse than one that is short and thin but also firm and hard. Because a firm and hard penis enters and exits in a rough way, it is worse than a soft penis. A soft penis moves tenderly and delicately. The golden mean is by far the best.

(text ECP, folio 132)

This section then discusses the use of drugs for lengthening a small member. The Plain Girl warns against the indiscriminate use of drugs. "If", she observes, "the emotions of the man and the woman are in harmony and if their spirits are in communion, . . . a small penis will grow by itself and a soft penis will harden" (ECP folio 133/5). It ends with a passage on the varying location of the vulva, which reads:

The Emperor asked: 'Wherein lies the difference of high, middle and low vulvae?' The Plain Girl replied: 'The goodness of a vulva does not reside in a place but in its use. All vulvas, whether in the high, middle, or low positions, possess desirable qualities, provided that someone knows how to use them well. A woman whose vulva is in the middle (in the space between the *mons veneris* and the anus) is suitable for copulation in all four seasons of the year and for induction into all sexual positions. For (in women too) the golden mean is best. A woman whose vulva is higher is suitable for cold winter nights. A man can have intercourse with her by lying on her under the colored quilts of a square bed. A woman whose vulva is lower and placed further towards the back is suitable especially for hot summers. A man can have intercourse with her by sitting on a stone bench under the shade of bamboo. He inserts his penis from behind as she bends forward in front of him with her knees on the ground. This is what is called utilizing the particular advantages of the shape of the woman one copulates with'.¹

(text ECP, vol. I, page 124).

Section VII is entitled *Nursing the Vital Essence* and contains a discussion of the importance of conserving the semen. It has a table giving the number of times men of varying ages can afford to ejaculate per week and month. The VIIIth and last section, entitled *The Four Signs of Man and the Nine Signs of Woman* bears a close resemblance to Sections X and XI of the *I-hsin-fang* quotations. There the text ends. Unlike the ancient handbooks it does not add a list of medical prescriptions.

It is to be noted that this treatise makes a clear distinction between on the one hand, the coitus exercised in order to strengthen the man's vital essence and benefit the woman's health by stirring her *yin* essence and, on the other hand, the coitus aimed at making the woman conceive. The first should be embellished with sexual play and made attractive by a number of variations. The second, on the contrary, should be consummated in a solemn spirit of humble devotion. To illustrate the author's treatment of these two different aspects of sexual intercourse, I translate here one passage from Section II, and another from Section V. The first passage is a description of the 8th of the Nine Postures, the second indicates the manner in which the

¹ Cf. R. T. Dickinson, "Human Sex Anatomy", Baltimore 1933, page 42: "It is generally stated that the location of the external genitals of women varies considerably and that the vulva may be placed forward or to the rear, with facility or difficulty in intercourse as a natural consequence. It is often asserted that such variants are racial traits, the rearward location belonging to the earlier developmental forms as in primitive races, and even in Orientals". The Chinese passage quoted here proves that rearward location is an individual rather than a racial trait. I may add that the Japanese distinguish the same three locations as described in the Chinese text. In modern Tōkyō-slang these are called *jō-hin* (high), *chū-bin* (middle) and *ge-bin* (low); *bin* is an arbitrary reading of the character *shina*, used to mark its special erotic sense. Read normally, *jō-hin* means "refined" and *ge-hin* "vulgar"; *chū-hin** does not exist.

sexual act should be performed in order to obtain offspring. The former is of special interest because it confirms the fact mentioned in Chapter IX of the *Tung-hsüan-tzû*, posture no. 15, namely that the handbooks also taught how a man could enjoy two women at the same time. Such postures are also occasionally depicted in the erotic picture albums.

Eight, the Posture of the Gobbling Fishes. A man makes two women lie down in position for coitus, so that one rests on her back while the other lies on top of her, with their pudenda touching each other. Then they should rub their vulvas against each other until the lips open spontaneously, resembling the mouths of fish that eat water plants, darting here and there. The man kneels between their thighs and waits until each woman has climaxed. Then he spreads their vaginas with his hand and inserts his penis between them. In this way, both women experience the fruit at the same time, experiencing great pleasure as the man moves his penis forward and backward on the inside. This method will greatly strengthen the sinews and bones and double one's potency, at the same time curing the five troubles and the nine afflictions. The posture reminds one of fish playing about among the waterplants. One should especially imitate the way they suck in the clear and blow out the turgid water.

(text ECP, vol. II, folio 123).

This passage gives one to understand that sapphism among the women-folk of a household was not only viewed tolerantly, but on occasion even encouraged. The passage about the sexual act exercised in order to obtain a child says:

The Emperor said: 'The union of husband and wife has the procreation of offspring as its ultimate purpose. Now why is it that some couples remain childless?' The Plain Girl replied: 'There are three kinds of wives and three kinds of husbands who shall not obtain offspring. Men whose semen is cold and unsubstantial, men who are of a lewd and dissolute nature, and men whose member shrinks on approaching a woman; those three shall not obtain children. Wives who are lewd by nature and whose passion is easily stirred, wives whose wombs are cold, and wives whose womb-gate is not open; those three shall not obtain children. Moreover, if husband and wife are not in harmony, if they engage in the act when excited by jealousy or hatred, they shall not obtain offspring.'

The Emperor asked: 'But what methods can those childless couples employ yet to obtain children?' The Plain Girl answered: 'The way to have offspring is to bring first both *yin* and *yang* in complete harmony. One's clothes and the coverlets and pillows of the couch should all be made of yellow gauze or silk. Then, on an auspicious day when according to the almanac sun and moon are in conjunction,¹ the man should write the day and hour on which he was born, and also those of his wife, on a tablet of prune-wood and place that on the couch. Moreover, on the 3rd day of the 9th lunar month, he should take a piece of wood from a peach

tree the branches of which grow in easterly direction, and thereon write his name and surname and those of his wife, then insert that piece of wood in the canopy of their couch. Then, on the 3rd or 4th day after the woman's menstruation, the couple should bathe and burn incense, and pray to the spirits of Heaven and Earth. Only after these preparations may they ascend the couch and unite themselves. At that time the woman's womb is not yet closed and she shall conceive. The technique of the act should be as indicated above, but the couple should keep their minds pure and free from all sorrow. They should not engage in accessory sexual play, not partake of aphrodisiacs, and not look together at albums with erotic pictures. If they offend against these rules, both the parents and their unborn child will be harmed.

(text ECP, vol. II, folio 130, 6/12).

Yellow is the colour of the fertile earth, and days when sun and moon are in conjunction are also called "yellow", *huang-tao*.¹ The peach, *t'ao*, was since olden times considered as a symbol of the woman's genitalia, and of fertility in general. In the Western Paradise of the Fairy Queen Hsi-wang-mu grows the peach tree that produces the Peach of Immortality. Also the wood of the tree was believed to be closely connected with fertility, and hence to ward off evil influences. Tablets made of this wood and inscribed with auspicious sentences were hung at the front gate on New Year's day, and are the origin of the later "door gods", the pair of devil-devouring deities, pictures of which are pasted on the front door of Chinese houses. It may be added that also the prune, *mei*, is a symbol of fertility and creative power, because in spring its gnarled and seemingly dead branches give forth blossoming sprigs and thus suggest the vital essence being renewed after winter. The canopy over a Chinese bedstead and the screen at the back are usually embroidered with a pattern of blossoming plum branches, as shown on Figure 14. The plum has come to stand for sexual pleasures and young women, and later venereal diseases are called *mei-tu* "prune poison". But unlike the peach, the plum is not used to designate a woman's private parts. Another fruit, next to the peach often used for the vulva is the pomegranate, which at the same time stands for fertility, both meanings being derived from the suggestive appearance of the reddish pulp enveloping the seeds. The same would seem to apply to the melon, *kua*, as used in the term *p'o-kua* "the broken melon", and designating that a girl has reached womanhood. Chinese commentators explain this term as meaning "the character *kua* broken in two", for this character can be viewed as two letters *pa* "eight" placed side by side; they say that therefore it means 2 times 8 = 16, the age when a girl reaches marriageable age. According to the same reasoning, the term *p'o-kua* is also

¹ I omitted to mention this in my translation in ECP, vol. I, p. 126.

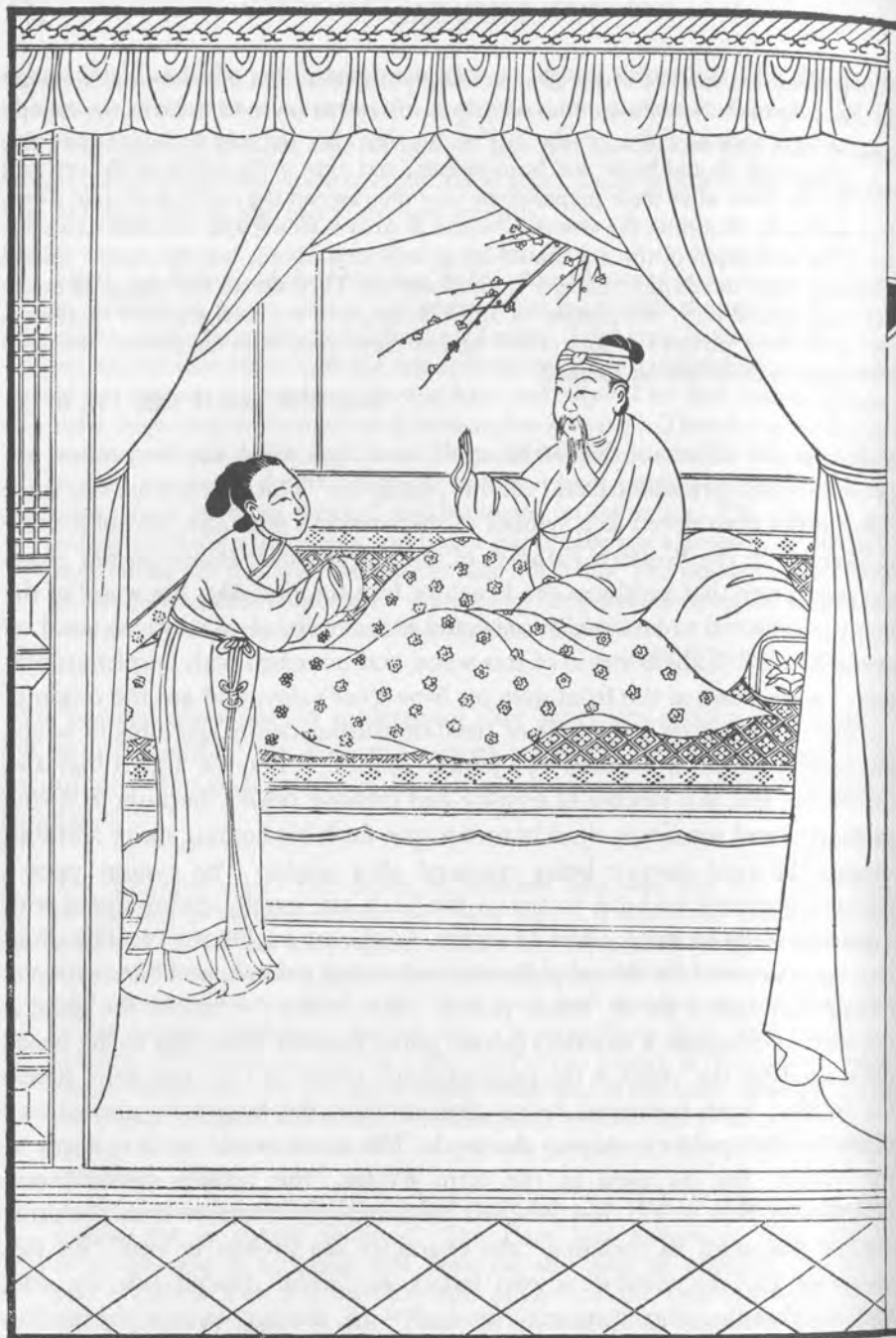


Figure 14

Chinese bedstead

From the Ming block-print Lieh-nü-chuan

used to indicate a man's reaching the age of 8 times 8 = 64. In my opinion, however, these are all secondary explanations. I think that *p'o-kua* originally just meant "broken red melon", an image of a girl's first menstruation, or of a virgin's defloration.

It may be added that also the peony and the lotus are used for indicating the vulva, but without special reference to fertility.

Returning to the passage discussed, one should note the "male" numbers 3 and 9 of the date when the tablet should be attached to the canopy. That the peach tree should have branches growing to the east probably refers to the fact that "east" designates the master of the house.

The concluding passage of the *Su-nü-miao-lun* reads:

The Yellow Emperor (after his conversation with the Plain Girl had been concluded) fasted and took a bath. Then for 81 days (i.e. the 'complete Yang number'; cf. page 17 above) he practised this art of the Inner Elixir, according to the teachings recorded here. When he had reached the age of 120 years, the Elixir of Immortality was completed and he cast a tripod on the bank of the lake (cf. above page 95). Then a Heavenly Dragon came down from the sky to meet him and, together with the Plain Girl, he ascended to Heaven in broad daylight.

(ECP, folio 139/5-7)

The second Ming treatise preserved in Japan deals with Taoist sexual alchemy. Its full title is *Ch'un-yang yen-chêng fou-yu-ti-chün chi-chi-chên-ching* "True Classic of the Complete Union, by the All-assisting Lord Ch'un-yang". The name Ch'un-yang "Pure Yang" refers to the Taoist immortal Lü Tung-pin. He is said to have lived during the Sung dynasty and later was made one of the Pashien, the well known set of the Taoist Eight Immortals. He figures there as a bearded man wearing a high official cap and carrying a long sword. *Chi-chi*, here translated as "Complete Union", is the 63rd hexagram of the *I-ching* symbolizing the sexual union, and discussed on page 36 above. For the sake of brevity we shall refer to this text as *Chi-chi-chên-ching*. The commentary added bears the name of a certain Têng Hsi-hsien, the "Great Immortal of the Purple-gold Splendour".

The *Chi-chi-chên-ching* was published in Japan as a blockprint, in one volume together with the *Hsiu-chên-yen-i*, a similar treatise that will be discussed below. The volume bears the title *Po-chan-pi-shêng* "Certain Victory in a Hundred Battles". Date and publisher are not indicated, but the style of printing points to ca. 1880. After the title-page there is a woodprint of a landscape picture, followed by six mildly erotic woodprints, each accompanied by a rather insipid Chinese poem on the page opposite the picture. After these additions, made by the Japanese editor, then follows the *Chi-chi-chên-ching*,

text and commentary, pp. 1-10, provided with Japanese reading marks. This book is rare, but still found occasionally on the Japanese market. It was privately reprinted with movable type in 1910. I compared the text with a small-size Chinese blockprint of the Wan-li era (1573-1619) and found it to be identical.

The main text is very brief, it consists of only nine paragraphs written in a concise, semi-metrical style that points to the T'ang period, or perhaps even earlier. Since it uses military terminology throughout it might easily be mistaken for a treatise on military tactics. Perhaps it was made up from fragments of the *Hsüan-nü-chen-ching* "The Dark Girl on War" (see page 75 above) or some other old handbook of sex where sexual intercourse was described as a "battle" (cf. page 157 above). Whereas the main text shows many archaic features, the commentary bears the hallmark of a late Taoist sexological text, and seems to date from the early Ming period.

This treatise is a typical example of the sexual alchemy of some Taoist schools. The man should "defeat" the "enemy" in the sexual "battle" by keeping himself under complete control so as not to emit semen, while at the same time exciting the woman till she reaches orgasm and sheds her *yin* essence, which is then absorbed by the man. These teachings could be easily expressed in military language because ancient Chinese military science and sexual alchemy have two fundamental principles in common. First, that one must spare his own force while utilizing that of the opponent; and second, that one must begin by yielding to him in order to catch him unawares thereafter. These principles play an important role in Chinese boxing and fencing, and were later adopted by the Japanese as the basis of their well known art of self-defense, called *ju-dō*.

The treatise begins with an introductory note where the commentator Têng Hsi-hsien states that he had received the treatise from the Immortal Lü Tung-pin, who added verbal explanations which Têng embodied in his commentary. Then the first paragraph of the text reads:

(Text) A superior general when he engages the enemy will first concentrate on drawing out his opponent, and as it were suck and inhale the enemy's strength. He will adopt a completely detached attitude, resembling a man who closes his eyes in utter indifference.

(Commentary) *Superior general* refers to the Taoist adept. *To engage* means to engage in the sexual act. *The enemy* is the woman. When the man is about to have intercourse, he should stroke the woman's vulva, suck her tongue, lightly press her nipples, and inhale her pure breath in order to arouse her lust. But the man should keep himself under control, his mind as detached as if it were floating in the azure sky, his body sunk into no-being. Closing his eyes, he should not look at the woman but maintain an utter nonchalance so that his own passion is not stirred.

(ECP, vol. II, folio 91/12)

Further on in the main text is the phrase "The turtle withdraws into itself, the dragon inhales, the serpent swallows, and the tiger lies in wait" (folio 93/10-11). The Commentary states that this formula contains the essence of the art of "defeating the enemy", for it indicates the four actions a man should perform in order to prevent emission and "make the semen return":

(Commentary) Closing eyes and mouth, withdrawing hands and feet, compressing the seminal duct between the fingers while concentrating the mind—this is the way a turtle withdraws into itself. By sucking up the "true liquid" (i.e. the vaginal emissions), by ensuring that it seeps (through the penis) up in the direction of the tailbone in a continuous flow until it reaches (through the spine) the *ni-huan* spot in the brain—this is how the snake breathes. As to the serpent swallowing its prey, it will first suck and nibble at its victim till it is completely powerless, then swallow it never to let it go again. When a tiger is about to grab its prey, it fears that the victim will detect him. Therefore the tiger crouches in concealment and silently lies in wait. In that manner its prey will never escape.

(ECP, vol. II, folio 93/14-94/1-4)

The penultimate paragraph describes the final stage of the "battle". There it is said:

(Text) While I am in no hurry, the enemy is hard pressed for time and throws his entire force into the battle. While the arms clash I advance and withdraw at will, using the enemy's proviant and exhausting his food-supply. Then I practise the tactics of the turtle, the dragon, the serpent and the tiger. The enemy will surrender his arms and I gather the fruits of victory. This is called *chi-chi* 'already completed', ensuring peace for one generation. I withdraw from the battlefield and dismiss my soldiers, I rest quietly to regain my strength. I convey the booty to the storeroom thereby increasing my power to the height of strength.

(Commentary) *Throws the entire force into the battle* means that the woman's passion reaches its apex. After she reaches the *chi-chi* (orgasm), I continue to move my penis in and out of the vagina, alternating deep and shallow thrusts. Now and then I withdraw my penis for a short time, suck her tongue, press her nipples, and make use of all the methods described above. Then the woman will shed her 'true essence' completely and it is absorbed by me. In this case *chi-chi* means that I have obtained the 'true Yang'. *One generation* means twelve years, thus the text implies that everytime a man obtains the 'true Yang' during the coitus his span of life will be prolonged by twelve years. The *store-room* is the marrow, the *height of strength* is the *ni-huan* point in the brain. *Withdrawing from the battlefield* means 'descending from the horse'. Thereafter the man should lie on his back and regulate his breath, moving his midriff so that the newly acquired vital essence flows up to the *ni-huan* and so strengthens his

supply of life power. In this way he shall remain free from disease and attain longevity.

The third Ming treatise to be discussed here is the *Tz'ü-chün-kuang-yüeh-ta-hsien-hsiu-chên-yen-i*, for the sake of brevity referred to as *Hsiu-chên-yen-i*. The complete title means "Explanation of the Meaning of the Cultivation of Truth, by the Great Immortal of the Purple-gold Splendour". Thus this text is allegedly composed by Têng Hsi-hsien, who wrote the commentary to the *Chi-chi-chên-ching*.

This text survives in an original Ming print, struck off in blue on a long horizontal scroll, and dated 1598, which is preserved in the collection of Mr. K. Shibui, in Tōkyō. Second, in the Japanese reprint *Po-chan-pi-shêng* mentioned above. Third, in a Japanese manuscript copy bound together with the *Su-nü-miao-lun* mentioned above. And fourth, the moveable-type reprint of 1910 which also contains the *Chi-chi-chên-ching*.

The text opens with a preface, signed by Têng Hsi-hsien. It says:

During the Han Dynasty, in the third year of the Yüan-fêng era (i.e. 108 B.C.), Wu Hsien presented to the Emperor Wu the 'Record of the Meaning of the Cultivation of Truth', but alas!, the Emperor could not use this book. Now this treatise has been transmitted to this late age. Everyone who can practise the art set forth herein, albeit but a little, will thereby strengthen his body and lengthen his life. And when he applies it with the purpose of obtaining offspring, he shall beget children who are wise and who will prove easy to rear. There are, however, certain things that should be avoided, and others that are taboo. One should know these first, then only can one proceed in the order indicated. I explained the meaning of this art in twenty chapters, dividing the process and establishing the correct sequence (of its various stages), so that while following this sequence one will reach the certain result. If this sequence is faithfully adhered to, the good result will materialize without fail. Those adepts who cultivate Truth will easily master this art.

Wu Hsien, "Sorcerer Hsien", is a mythical figure, here apparently confused with Wu Yen, mentioned in the *Su-nü-ching* as having initiated the Emperor Wu (cf. p. 137 above).

Chapters I and II of the text describe what should be avoided and what is taboo, as announced in the Preface. They state what women should be avoided for sexual intercourse, and when conditions are unsuitable for it; for instance, when the man is intoxicated, or feeling very weak and weary. Chapter III explains that the Art of the Bedchamber, while benefiting persons familiar with its secrets, may harm and even kill inexperienced people. Chapter IV describes the ideal female partner for the act, here referred to by the special Taoist term *pao-ting* "Precious Crucible".

Thereafter Chapters V, VI and VII enumerate the various signs indicating that the man and woman are in fit condition for the act, similar to Sections X and XI of the *I-hsin-fang* quotations.

Chapter VIII describes the various methods for exciting the woman's lust, and her reactions. This passage begins with the following statement:

The feelings of woman lie deeply hidden. How can one rouse them and how can one know when they have been roused? In order to rouse them one should follow the method of first serving a light liqueur to someone who desires strong wine. Affectionate women should be made even more tender by sweet discourses, greedy women should be excited by costly presents, libidinous women should be excited by the sight of an erect penis. Woman's feelings are naturally ruled by no fixed principle, they are always easily influenced by what they see. (ECP, vol. II, folio 100/12).

Chapter IX consists of a lengthy discussion of how a man can strengthen his member. He should apply a complicated massage, and the passage is concluded by the statement "If then the man begins the sexual act, he should first take a silk band and wind it tightly round the base of his member" (folio 102/6-7). Such and similar aids are often mentioned in Ming erotic novels. The *Chin-p'ing-mei*, for instance, includes in the list of sexual aids which the hero Hsi-mên Ch'ing used to carry about with him i.a. "A white band boiled in medicine", *yao-chu po-tai-tzû* (op. cit. Chapter 38), which doubtless served a similar purpose; the "medicine" in which it had been boiled was probably some aphrodisiac. The same list mentions also a "suspended jade ring", *hsüan-yü-huan*.¹ An erotic colour print of that time (reproduced in ECP, vol. I, plate XIII) proves that this was a ring of jade that was fitted round the base of the erected member, being kept in place by a silk band that passed between the legs and then was fastened round the waist. An actual specimen of such a ring is reproduced on Plate XV. It is made of ivory, and decorated in front with a pair of dragons, carved in relief. Their tongues are twined together so as to form a protruding spiral. On the one hand this spiral suggests the *yeh-ming-chu* "the pearl that shines in the dark" (usually explained as a symbol of the sun, fertility and magic potency) dragons are supposed to play with, but on the other hand the spiral doubtless had at the same time the practical function of stimulating the woman's clitoris during the movement. The fastening-band was passed through the hole between the dragon's tails.

¹ Cf. CPM vol. II, page 157, where this particular term, together with the items *fêng-ch'i-kao* "sealing-the-navel ointment" and *mien-ling* "exertion bell", are generally referred to as "all manner of things for increasing passion".

Chapter X further describes the precautions a man should take not to emit semen during the sexual congress. It says i.a.: "When a man first begins to engage in sexual intercourse he must by all means suppress all lustful thought. For the first skirmish, he should choose a 'stove' with a wide vagina and who is ugly so that she does not excite his passion and does not give him intense pleasure. In that way the man will easily learn how to control himself" (folio 102/10). Chapter XI is an elaboration of this point. It says:

Every man who has obtained a beautiful 'crucible' will naturally love her with all his heart. But everytime he copulates with her he should force himself to think of her as ugly and hateful. When the mind is completely calm, he inserts his Jade Stalk into the 'bowl' and slowly moves it forward and backward. When he has done this two or three times, he interrupts the motions in order to quell his lust. After a short time, he begins afresh and continues until the woman experiences great pleasure. When she has reached this point and is scarcely able to restrain herself anymore, he should move slowly so that the woman comes to orgasm first. The man continues to thrust, but when he feels that he is about to ejaculate he should quickly withdraw his Jade Stalk and use the art of restraining his semen.

(ECP, folio 103/2).

Chapter XII deals with the means for preventing ejaculation, as described in the older handbooks, namely by a combination of mental discipline and the physical means of compressing the urethra.

It is curious that whereas practically all the handbooks discuss in great detail the methods for "making the semen return", nothing is said about the "descending" of the semen during the first stages of the sexual act. To supplement this lacuna I may be allowed to insert here a quotation from a Ming source which deals with Taoist disciplines in general. This is a brief treatise entitled *T'ing-hsin-chai-k'o-wên-shuo* "Conversations with a guest in the Studio-where-one-listens-to-the-heart", which was written by a scholar called Wan Shang-fu. It was reprinted in 1936 by the Commercial Press, in vol. 0575 of the large collection *Ts'ung-shu-chi-ch'êng*. The 30th paragraph reads:

The guest asked: 'What is the difference between the original semen, and the semen that is produced by the influence of sexual desire?' I replied: 'Both are the same thing. Prior to the sexual act the semen is distributed over the five viscera and the six bowels (i.e. over the entire system), it has no fixed location. It dwells in condensed form with the Original Spirit. This is the Original Semen. When man and woman unite in sexual congress, the semen flows down from the *ni-huan* spot in the brain, descending along the spine to the bladder and the kidneys; then it is emitted and becomes an impure substance. This is the semen as activated by the sexual urge.

After this digression we continue our survey of the *Hsiu-chên-yen-i*. Chapter

XIII is of special interest since it shows how the medicinal properties of the various female secretions were formulated in a special theory. This passage in particular must have been widely known in the end of the Ming dynasty, for it is quoted *verbatim* in the pornographic novel *I-ch'ing-chên* (cf. ECP, vol. I, page 129), and often referred to in erotic prose and poetry.¹ It is translated hereunder.

The Great Medicine of the Three Peaks. The upper is called the Red Lotus Peak, its medicine is named Jade Fountain, Jade Fluid, or Fountain of Sweet Spirits. This medicine emanates from the two cavities under a women's tongue. Its colour is grey. When it comes forth from the Flowery Field the man should swallow it so that it reaches the Storied Pagoda and it is received in his Cinnabar Field. It will moisten his five viscera, on the left strengthening the Mysterious Gate and on the right increasing the Cinnabar Field, generating vital essence and new blood.

The middle peak is called the Double Lotus Peak and its medicine is called Peach of Immortality, White Snow or also Coral Juice. This medicine emanates from the two breasts of a woman (cf. page 95 above). Its colour is white, its taste sweet and agreeable. The man should suck up the medicine and drink it. When this medicine has reached his Cinnabar Field, it will nourish his spleen and stomach. At the same time, in the woman whom it has been sucked from, it will help the circulation of blood, and will bring an exuberant feeling of pleasure in both mind and body. Above it reaches till the Flowery Pond, below it answers to the Mysterious Gate, so that all the humours of the body increase and develop. Of the three peaks, this one should receive attention first. A woman who has not yet born a child and who has not yet milk in her breasts will give the most benefit.

The lower is called Peak of the Purple Agaric, also the Grotto of the White Tiger, or the Mysterious Gateway. Its medicine is called White Lead,² or Moon Flower. It comes from the depths of the vagina and its door is usually closed. However, when the woman is so aroused during coitus that her cheeks grow red and her voice halts, the door opens and liquid flows forth when she comes to orgasm. When this liquid is gathered in the vagina, the man should withdraw his penis by the length of a thumb. Then he should move forward and backward again, in order to pump the woman's essence, thereby benefiting his 'original Yang' and nurturing his spirit.

This is the Great Medicine of the Three Peaks.

(ECP, folio 104/12).

¹ HYTS reprints in vol. 1 of the 9th series a long description of the "three peaks" in a curious document entitled *Wên-jou-hsiang-chi* "Account of the Warm-and-soft Country", by Liang Kuo-chêng, of undetermined date. "Warm-and-soft" is a literary term much used during the Ch'ing period for referring to carnal love. This document is a kind of geography of the female body, which is represented as a country visited by the writer who cites in detail its delights and dangers. The terms for the various parts of the female anatomy are borrowed from the Taoist manuals for sexual alchemy, and the Three Peaks figure prominently there.

² Older texts consider the man's semen as the white lead; cf. page 83 above.

Chapter XIV is a lengthy discussion of the most important points of the man's technique of "making the semen return". The description is divided into five sections, each of which is an explanation of one particular word. Hence this chapter is entitled *Wu-tzû-chên-yen* "The Mantra of the Five Characters", a typical Tantric term.

Chapter XV again describes the various stages of the sexual act, beginning with preliminary play and ending with the man's technique of extracting the woman's *yin* essence. At the end it is stated that this technique "is not very harmful to the woman and of great benefit to the man. It includes the mutual obtaining of Yin and Yang, the complete union of water and fire".

The remaining chapters repeat and amplify the preceding discussions. Chapter XVI again explains the art of making the semen return. Here the text uses a new technical term for this process, namely *huang-ho-ni-liu* "to make the Yellow Stream flow upward" (folio 109/8). Chapter XVII discusses the general significance of the sexual act. Chapter XVIII elaborates the benefits a man can derive from sexual intercourse, illustrating the argument by comparing the coitus with grafting a new live branch on an aging tree; every coitus during which the man controls himself will impart new life to him. Chapter XIX again describes the benefits from making the semen return.

Finally, Chapter XX deals with the methods for making a woman conceive. The coitus should be practised during the first days after menstruation, man and woman should reach orgasm simultaneously, etc., as indicated in the older handbooks.

At the end of this treatise there is added a colophon that refers to the *Chi-chi-chên-ching* and the *Hsiu-chên-yen-i* together. There it is said:

During the reign of the Emperor Shih-tsung (1522–1566) I served at the Imperial Court in Peking. At that time the Taoist adept T'ao enjoyed the Imperial favour because of his magic skills. Now his achievements consisted of mere magic and juggling, but his knowledge of the Art of the Bedchamber was very real. The fact that the Emperor reached such an advanced age was due entirely (to T'ao's instructing him in the sexual disciplines). I, being a devotee of this art, bribed a Palace official and thus could purchase a copy of the secret books of Master T'ao, namely the *Chi-chi-chên-ching* and the *Hsiu-chên-yen-i*, written by a disciple of the Immortal Lü Tung-pin. When I proceeded to put these principles into practice, at first I found it very difficult to control myself (so as not to emit semen), but after some time it became a natural habit. In the course of sixty years I have had intercourse with more than a hundred women and reared seventeen sons. I have served under five Emperors and thus seen five reigns. Now, although I am advanced in years, I on occasion still engage in the Art of the Bedchamber, and then I can still satisfy several women in one session. Although Heaven blessed me with a long

life, it cannot be gainsaid that this art also contributed to it. The proverb says: 'Those who monopolize their skill will come to a bad end'. Moreover, man's span of life is limited to a hundred years. If one day I come to die, I could not bear these two books to become lost. Therefore I had them printed in order to promulgate the virtue of the Great Immortal, expressing the wish that all men in this world may reach the advanced age of P'êng-tsu. Should there be some who aver that these two books contain nothing but idle talk, let them thus throw away their own chances at attaining longevity. Why should I bother about them?"

"Written in the first lunar month of the spring of the year 1594, by the greybeard of 95 years, of Chekiang, in the Purple Agaric Hall of the T'ien-t'ai Mountains.

The Ming print in the Shibui collection has the same colophon, but the signature reads: "Written in midsummer of 1598, by the greybeard of 100 years of Ling (?), in the Pavilion of Heavenly Fragrance'.

Aside from the two manuals described in the above, the Taoist Canon apparently contained originally more works of a similar nature. One finds there books with titles such as *Huang-ti-shou-san-tz'ü-hsüan-nü-ching* "The Yellow Emperor teaching the three philosophers the Classic of the Dark Girl", *Lü-ch'ün-yang-chên-jên-pi-yüan-ch'ün-tan-tz'ü-chieh* "Explanation of the Spring Elixir of the Pi Garden, by the Immortal Lü Tung-pin". Originally these books treated doubtless of sexual alchemy, but when in the years 1444-1447 the Taoist Canon was printed, it was thoroughly expurgated. Since at that time Buddhism had been reduced to largely an idolatrous cult of the common people, orthodox Confucianists did not deem it worth their while to persecute it. But Taoism still had a strong hold on many literati, and hence the Confucianist bureaucracy carefully watched it. If the charge of engaging in *yün-sz'ü* "immoral cults" could be brought against the Taoist sectarians, they could be indicted and severely punished. That was the reason why when the Taoist Canon was printed, the passages pertaining to sexual alchemy were carefully deleted. The Buddhist Canon had rid itself of the Tantric sexual texts already long before.

In the second half of the Ming dynasty, therefore, the Taoist sexual mysticism was becoming more and more a secret tradition. The ancient handbooks of sex were falling into oblivion, and those written during the earlier part of the Ming period were published in limited editions, so that their contents were but vaguely known to scholars in general. The only people who still had a profound knowledge of Taoist sexual disciplines were the Taoist adepts, and a small

circle of literati in Nanking with a penchant for erotica, about whom more shall be said in the following pages.

The general principles of the handbooks of sex were no doubt still practised, but their detailed disciplines and their technical terminology were not known in broader circles. Most scholars who wrote about the subject at this time knew of it only by hearsay, and many doubted the effectiveness of those methods. Here may be quoted the opinion of Wang Chieh, a scholar who flourished ca. 1640, in the last years of the Ming dynasty, and who was famous because of his wide learning and his elegant tastes. The passage is found in his *Kuang-tzu-hsü* "Enlarged Autobiography".¹ He says:

My late grandfather once met a strange man who taught him the art of 'the dragon and the tiger spitting and receiving', and he practised that art forty years on end. After he had achieved it he would put on thick furs in summer and then sleep in the blazing sun, without losing even one drop of sweat. In winter he would fill a large tub with cold water, and sit submerged therein the whole day, and yet not feel cold. Since my own constitution is unfit for becoming an immortal, I myself did not attempt those disciplines. But as to the 'Important Devices for obtaining the Original Femininity', I have heard much about those. The most important point is to treasure one's spirit and to save one's semen. Foolish persons give themselves over to those dissolute practices till at last their potency dwindles and their member will not rise, and they must have recourse to drugs made from birds and quadrupeds. The red-spotted lizard (*ko-chieh*) is an 'odd' animal,² and therefore used for making aphrodisiacs. They also take the genitals of a lewd animal as the beaver, and (with the drug obtained therefrom) anoint their member. And since the seal is said to mate with a hundred females, therefore also the genitals of seals are sold as aids in the Art of the Bedchamber. How can people thus destroy the truth and debase Tao, honour animals and despise human beings? Moreover there are Taoist magicians who propagate the theory about 'gathering the *yin* essence' and who aver that one can attain to longevity by having intercourse with women. But I have not yet seen that a lizard developed the Elixir of Life, that a beaver became an Immortal, or that a seal ascended to heaven in broad daylight!

It deserves mentioning that Wang Chieh says that he had only heard about those things, he does not refer to his ever having read about them.

¹ Text reprinted, with extensive notes, in the excellent modern edition of a number of works relating to love and elegant life, entitled *Mei-hua-wên-hsüeh-ming-cho-ts'ung-k'an*, 1 vol., published by Chu Chien-mang, Shanghai 1936.

² About the *ko-chieh*, *Phrynosoma* sp., there exists an extensive literature. Apparently the belief in its superabundant potency is based on the fact that when copulating with its mate it will not let it go even when caught. The animal is put alive in a jar of wine, and left there for a year or so, after which the wine is sold as an aphrodisiac.

The influence of the handbooks of sex is not noticeable in the numerous novels, short-stories and plays of a general character that were written during the later part of the Ming dynasty. Occasionally there occur erotic passages, but the descriptions of sexual congress are couched in general terms, and not in the technical terminology of the old handbooks. Although as a matter of course of far less importance for the study of sexual life than the erotic and pornographic novels of that period which will be discussed below, also this general literature is useful for sociological orientation. Especially recommended is one of the stories of the collection *Chin-ku-ch'i-kuan* "Panorama of Strange Happenings of Modern and Old Times", entitled *Mai-yu-lang-tu-chan-hua-kuei* "The Oil-vendor who conquers the Queen of Beauty", which is available in a good French translation.¹ It narrates how a poor oil-vendor falls in love with a famous beautiful courtesan and how in the end his loyal devotion to her is rewarded by his obtaining her in marriage. The story gives detailed descriptions regarding life in a brothel, with many witty and realistic dialogues. Especially the portrait of the "mother" of the brothel is evidently drawn from life. Although the scene is laid in the Sung dynasty, customs and morals described are those of the author's own time, namely the last years of the Ming period.

Even the writers of the great erotic—as distinct from pornographic—novels of the end of the Ming period had apparently but a vague knowledge of the handbooks of sex and Taoist sexual alchemy. One arrives at this conclusion when one reads through the most famous erotic novel of Chinese literature, the *Chin-p'ing-mei*, and also its sequel *Ko-lien-hua-ying*.

The *Chin-p'ing-mei* gives a detailed account of the intimate relations among the members of a large Chinese household, including most realistic descriptions of sexual intercourse, both in prose and poetry. But the terminology used in those passages is derived from the slang of that day, not from the handbooks of sex. And although the hero of the *Chin-p'ing-mei* has sexual relations with a large number of women, both inside and outside his household, originally decent ladies as well as common prostitutes, the novel alludes nowhere to the possibility of these liaisons strengthening his vital essence or lengthening his span of life. The same remark applies to the *Ko-lien-hua-ying*. That novel employs once in a passage describing the sexual act the expression "nine shallow thrusts followed by one deep one" (*chiu-chien-i-shên*; ch. 11, near the end), familiar from the handbooks of sex, but it says only that this technique

¹ G. Schlegel, "Le Vendeur d'huile qui seul possède la Reine-de-Beauté, ou Splendeurs et Misères des Courtizanes chinoises", Leyden and Paris, 1877. With an introduction which describes a visit to a Cantonese "flower-boat" in 1861. Reprint of original Chinese text added.

is derived from a *P'iao-ching*, a "Book on Whoring". Now although opinions differ on who were the authors of these two books, no one doubts that they were men of considerable learning. That even they were unfamiliar with the old sexological texts constitutes strong evidence that towards the end of the Ming dynasty these books were little known in broader circles of writers and scholars.

The two erotic novels mentioned above must now be discussed in greater detail, for they are mines of information on Chinese private and public life, manners, morals and sexual habits of that time. Especially the *Chin-p'ing-mei* is not only a novel of great literary merits, but also an important sociological document. Fortunately this novel is available in a good English translation, which is highly recommended for further orientation on Chinese life in the second part of the Ming dynasty.¹

This novel describes in a vigorous colloquial style the life of a wealthy owner of a large pharmacy, called Hsi-mên Ch'ing, and his six wives. The story is presented as having happened during the Sung dynasty, during the reign of the Emperor Hui-tsung (1101-1126), when the notorious corrupt Minister Ts'ai Ching (BD no. 1971) was in power. But life and customs described are those of the author's own time, the Ming period.

As the author remarks in the first chapter, he wrote this novel in order to warn the people of his time against striving after wealth and worldly honours, and especially against over-indulgence in sexual pleasure. Wealth and power are transitory as water bubbles, and as to sexual pleasure:

A sweet girl of eighteen years,
Her breasts are soft and white—
But below her waist she carries a sword
That will behead all foolish men.
Although one does not see
Their severed heads roll,
Imperceptibly she will drain your bones
Of the last drop of marrow.

Then he goes on to explain that "the gate that gave life to you, can also be the gate leading to your death", and that "the curved stockinged leg and the three inches of the Golden Lotus feet, are the spades and hoes that fashion a man's burial mound".

Tradition requires that an erotic novel opens on this cautionary note, but in this particular case the author was probably in earnest. Even the more

¹ Edgerton's translation mentioned in the List of Abbreviations under CPM.

lurid passages are written in a dispassionate manner, one does not find in the *Chün-p'ing-mei* the evident pleasure in obscene descriptions that marks the pornographic novels of that time. And in the end the dissolute hero and Gold Lotus, the lewd woman who helps him to ruin his house, both come to grief. Hsi-mên Ch'ing dies of an overdose of an aphrodisiac she administers to him, and she herself is killed by the brother of her former husband whom she poisoned. The plot is carefully worked out, characters and environment sketched briefly but with an unerring hand, and the dialogues are masterly and consequently sustained in the manner peculiar to each of the numerous different persons throughout the book. Altogether this is a great novel that ranks among the best of this kind in world literature.

This book is not the place to go further into the novel's content, a few general remarks about the sexual relations depicted there may suffice.

In the first place, one notices the paucity of pathological phenomena. Although Hsi-mên Ch'ing is depicted as a dissolute man who broke no restraint of his violent appetites, and his boon-companions as hardly any better, sadism and similar traits are conspicuous by their absence. There is much playful perversity and much Rabelaisian humor and practical jokes, but these are occasioned by an interest in variety, rather than by perverted instincts; this also applies to Hsi-mên Ch'ing's homosexual relation with his page. The absence of pathological traits is all the more remarkable since a man of Hsi-mên Ch'ing's wealth and position could have easily been described as indulging with impunity in sadistic extravagances, without marring the realism or verisimilitude of the novel. But such subjects did not occur to the author, evidently because he had not observed them in his own time and surroundings. And he was sufficiently keen on exposing all other abuses or malpractices that had come to his notice.

As regards perversities occurring in this novel, one notices the frequent mentioning of fellatio, referred to as the woman's "playing the flute", while cunnilingus is not quoted. The latter seems to have been practised especially in Taoist circles. Anal sex as performed by a man on a woman, on the contrary, is repeatedly mentioned. One woman in particular (called Porphyry in CPM) is even stated to prefer pedicatio, combined with masturbation, to normal sexual intercourse. Porphyry loved one game above all. Joined to a man in order to make love, she wanted him to penetrate her anus, while she herself played with her intimate flower. (CPM, vol. II, page 149; similar passage in vol. II, page 317). Further: He ordered the woman to raise herself on her hands and feet like a horse, and penetrated her anus. He did this countless times while the woman's bottom clapped with a loud noise. She played with the heart of the flower (clitoris) with her hands down. (CPM, vol. IV, p. 82; Latin text

as in original). Also in other erotic and pornographic novels pedicatio with women is often met with; cf. ECP vol. I, Index s.v. anal coitus, and Plate XIX, and vol. III Plate 4. The female posterior is often praised in erotic prose and poetry, it being usually compared with the full moon, *mīng-yüeh*. If in pre-Ch'ing texts one finds in an erotic passage the full moon described as being approached by a "flowering branch" or "jade tree", this must as a rule be taken to refer to this practice. In Ch'ing times these connotations were forgotten, but general terms as *hou-t'ing-hua* "the flower of the hind garden" and *han-lin-fēng* "the way of the Academicians" were still understood and used. This preference is sometimes explained in Western literature as being peculiar to hot climates where the vaginal reflexes tend to be more lax, and the normal coitus therefore often less attractive to men. But to the best of my knowledge this practice is not referred to in Sanskrit literature, neither in classical Greek, whereas it did occur in ancient Rome.¹ This problem may be left to sexologists to solve.

Other points in the *Chin-p'ing-mei* such as sexual aids, cruelty of women to other women, sapphism etc. have already been referred to in the foregoing chapters.

Another author wrote a sequel to the *Chin-p'ing-mei*, entitled *Kò-lien-hua-yīng* "Flower Shadows on the Screen Curtain". Although written later, this novel still reflects manners and customs of the Ming period. In this story the destinies of the main characters in the *Chin-p'ing-mei* are worked out further: Hsi-mên Ch'ing's virtuous principal wife and other deserving members of his entourage obtain their reward, and the bad characters are punished. Though inferior to the *Chin-p'ing-mei* as a literary production, this novel still will provide useful reading for further orientation.²

The reader should always remember, however, that the milieu in which these two novels play is that of the un-cultured parvenus—a class that

¹ At least I do not remember having read about it in Sanskrit literature, and R. Schmidt does not mention it in his comprehensive "Beiträge zur Indischen Erotik". I did not find it in H. Licht's "Sexual Life in Ancient Greece" (London 1956), neither in his more detailed "Sittengeschichte Griechenlands" (3 vols., Zürich 1928). Kiefer does not mention the practice in his "Sexual Life in Ancient Rome" (London 1953), although it is repeatedly referred to in Latin literature, either as a means of sparing the bride temporarily the pains of defloration (Seneca, Controv. II: "I am familiar with the abstinence of those grooms who grant dispensation to timid virgins on the first night, but nevertheless sport with other girls nearby"; Martialis XI, LXXVII: "She will let the eager groom bugger her just once, because she fears the first wound of the new spear"), or as lewd custom (Martialis XI, XLIV: "Don't give masculine names to your genitals. Consider, my wife, that you have two cunts"; ibid. XI, CIV: "You deny that they buggered, but Cornelia offered it to Gracchus", etc.). In the Semitic world the practice was widely known, the locus classicus being Romans 1-26, and it is frequently mentioned in later Arabic handbooks of love.

² Cf. the German translation by F. Kuhn mentioned on p. 162 above.

came to the fore during the turbulent last years of the Ming dynasty. Hsi-mên Ch'ing's literary knowledge is barely sufficient for dealing with his business documents, he cannot read an official letter without assistance. He nor his friends have the slightest interest in art, literature or other intellectual pursuits, and neither have their women. Thus in the description of their sexual relations the author had to confine himself to depicting a rather inarticulate, carnal love. Hsi-mên Ch'ing has a kind of jovial affection for his women, but pictures of deep passion, let alone passion accompanied by spiritual love, would have been out of place in that novel.

In order to complete the picture of sexual relations of that period, the reader should, therefore, refer to a book like the *Ying-mei-an-i-yü* "Reminiscences of the Plum-shadow Hermitage". This book—an authentic biographical account—was written by the Ming scholar Mao Hsiang (1611–1693), after the death of his favourite concubine called Tung Hsiao-wan. It is also available in a good English translation.¹ They were together during the turbulent period of the change of dynasty, so that next to being a stirring account of their love, this book is at the same time a realistic record of how those uncertain times affected the life of a prominent family.

When Mao Hsiang met her he was one of the leading lights of a circle of sophisticated writers and artists, famous for his good looks and his wide learning. Tung Hsiao-wan was a courtesan of Ch'in-huai, the brothel quarter in Nanking, known for her wit and beauty. She became deeply infatuated with the elegant young scholar, but he was happily married and she was involved with a powerful patron. Therefore it took a year before all the prelimi-

¹ Pan Tze-yen, "The Reminiscences of Tung Hsiao-wan", Commercial Press, Shanghai 1931. The original Chinese text is added to the translation. For love in literary circles there may be recommended also three other books, although they date from the Ch'ing period and therefore differ in atmosphere from those treated here. In the first place the famous roman-de-moeurs entitled *Hung-lou-mêng*, available in an abbreviated English translation by Wang Chi-chen, "The Dream of the Red Chamber" (London & New York 1929). Bancroft Joly began a more complete translation, but did not finish it (2 vols., published under the title "Dream of the Red Chamber", Hongkong 1892). Up till now the least abbreviated translation is the German one by F. Kuhn, "Der Traum der Roten Kammer", Insel Verlag, Leipzig n.d., which gives about two-thirds of the text of this extraordinarily long novel; English ed. "The Dream of the Red Chamber", Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1959. Further the *Fou-shêng-liu-chi* "Six Chapters of a Floating Life", the autobiographical account of a minor Ch'ing painter and poet Shên Fu (1763–ca. 1820), describing i.a. his wife Ch'ên Yün who died young; translated by Lin Yü-t'ang in the periodical "T'ien Hsia Monthly", vol. I, Hongkong 1935. And the *Ch'iu-t'ing-shi-i* "Reminiscences written by the Autumn Lamp", an account by the Ch'ing scholar Chiang Tan of his favourite concubine Ch'iu-fu; fragments translated by Lin Yü-t'ang in his book "The Importance of Living" (New York 1938), ch. 10 "Two Chinese Ladies". The Chinese texts of these three books, with full annotations, will be found in Chu Chien-mang's collection mentioned on page 286 above, footnote 1.

naries had been arranged, and she could enter his house as a concubine. In those circles the taking of a new concubine was not as simple a matter as in the milieu of Hsi-mên Ch'ing, the hero of the *Chin-p'ing-meï*, who when he met a singing girl he liked paid her debts and told her to pack her bundles and follow him. Mao Hsiang narrates her coming to his house as follows:

When she arrived I was keeping my father company drinking wine in our garden. I did not dare to apprise my father suddenly of this matter, and waited upon him till the fourth nightwatch. Then only I could go back into the house. But my wife had set to work already on her own account, she had put in order a separate apartment, so that when my concubine arrived she found everything ready there, including curtains, lamp, fruit, food and drink. When after I had taken leave of my father I went to see her, she said: 'When I disembarked I at first wondered why you were not there, I only saw a group of maids who crowded round me when I left the boat. Secretly I was full of misgivings and felt very sad. But when upon entering here I saw how nicely everything had been arranged, I felt deeply grateful to your wife, and I was indeed glad that I had been working for this assiduously for one whole year'.

Thereupon she kept herself to her own apartment. She did not play music, did not powder and rouge herself, and kept herself occupied with needlework. For more than one month she did not venture to associate with the rest of the household, enjoying the peace of her own apartment. She told me that having suddenly left the 'fiery clouds ten-thousand fathoms deep' (i.e. the life of a courtesan) and entered upon a clean world of peace and quiet, she looked back upon the past five years in the 'wind and dust' as a bad dream or a stay in a dungeon. After a few months she had reached great proficiency in all kinds of needlework, she was especially good at embroidery, doing every day six handkerchiefs or skirts so neatly that one could not tell the stitches apart. She also could make paper flowers and embroider palindromes, and therein surpassed the skill of the ancients.

After she had been thus living in her own rooms for four months, my wife went herself to her and made her move into our own apartment. My mother and my wife grew very fond of her, and treated her with special kindness. Also my sisters enjoyed her company, they said that she had a charming character and excellent manners. And my concubine on her part did her utmost to serve them, outdoing even the maidservants in diligence. She prepared herself the tea for my mother and my wife, and peeled the fruit for them, anticipating their every wish. No matter whether winter or summer she would wait upon them at table, and only sit down to eat herself when urged to. But then she would soon rise again and serve the others, as before.

Everytime when my two sons who I was teaching did not prepare their lessons well and when I was going to cane them, she would sit down and go over their work with them, not resting till they had written out their lessons perfectly, even if it took her the whole evening.

Soon she took part in her husband's literary work, copying out texts for him and keeping his books and manuscripts in order. She had a natural gift for poetry, and they would pass entire evenings together talking about the works of the famous T'ang poets and pondering over difficult passages. She amused herself by culling from old literature all references to women's dress, personal adornment, dancing and singing and thus compiled a brief treatise entitled *Lien-yen* "The Elegance of the Dowry".

But this happy life was not to last. The military situation worsened and the Mao family had to flee from one place to another. Tung Hsiao-wan then proved to be also a very practical and energetic person, she made herself useful organizing their peregrinations, and tended Mao Hsiang for weeks when he had fallen ill on the journey. Once, during a severe winter, they had to hide in an empty house in a desolate city, the scene of intermittent warfare. They could not go on because Mao had fallen seriously ill.

I remember that when my sickness had taken a serious turn, I could not sleep in the night, outside the wind was howling. In the city hundreds of people were killed everyday, in the deep of night I could hear through the broken windows their ghosts wailing in the street, like the incessant drone of insects or the whirring of arrows. The entire household, worn out by cold and hunger, was fast asleep, but I was sitting up in my bed, my concubine supporting me. She clasped my hands firmly in hers while, straining our ears, we listened to the weird sounds outside in the street. Crying softly she said: 'I have been with you now four years, living together with you all day I have come to know your generosity, you are never mean not even in small things. Your shortcomings I also know, but I understand them and know the reason. I love your heart more than I love your body, handsome as you are. I am certain that in the end Heaven will favour us. But human life is hazardous, and we know not whether we shall be able to tide over the present difficulties. But should we come through alive, you and I should abandon all worldly affairs, and live together caring only for those things that really matter. Do not forget these words I told you now!' Alas, I could never requit her love in this present life.

They were together for nine years. She had always been of delicate health, and when she was twenty-six she died, presumably of consumption. Since she became Mao Hsiang's concubine when she was seventeen, and according to her own statement quoted above had then been living five years in the brothel-quarter, it follows that she must have been twelve when she was entered there, as an apprentice. Defloration usually took place when the girls were fifteen or sixteen years old. Mao Hsiang himself lived to an advanced age, but he could never forget her. The reminiscences which he dedicated to her,

written in a highly polished literary style, rank among the master-pieces of Ming literature.

The ephemeral figure of Tung Hsiao-wan, often ill and subject to attacks of fever at the slightest emotion, foreshadows the type of very young, fragile and delicate women that during the Ch'ing period would become the ideal of feminine beauty. This type was gradually becoming popular already in the literature of the later years of the Ming dynasty.

The painters of that time, however, still preferred a sturdy feminine beauty, plump women with round, chubby faces and fully developed figures. Such are the women depicted for instance by the Ming painter T'ang Yin (styled Po-hu, 1470-1523), who was famous for his pictures of women, also in the nude. Figure 15 is a Ming woodcut reproducing one of his paintings, a good example of the mature, purposeful type of women then preferred. The erotic picture albums where these women appear in the nude, show them as well covered with flesh, with large and firm breasts, rounded bellies and heavy thighs.

Slightly later one notices a tendency to more slender types, especially in the work of the second famous Ming painter of women, the celebrated Ch'iu Ying who flourished ca. 1550 A.D. Plates XVI and XVII reproduce two of his pictures, done in full colours on silk, taken from an album on elegant living, formerly in the Ch'ing Palace collection. Here one sees that the women are rather slim, and have longer, oval faces.

This style found its way also to Japan. There the woodprint artists of the Gen-roku era (1688-1703), especially the designers of erotic prints, gave their women the round faces and plumb figures of Chinese classical art. But in the 18th century they favour the well-known willowy figures of the *ukiyo-e* prints, with the *urisane-gao*, the oval "melon-seed faces".

It will be noticed in Plates XVI and XVII that also the ideal of masculine beauty was changing. Instead of the middle-aged, bearded men of the T'ang and Sung periods, ardent lovers are now preferably depicted as younger men without beard, moustache or whiskers. At that time athletics were still admired, young students practised boxing, fencing and archery, and riding and hunting were favourite pastimes. Thus bodily strength was one of the recognized attributes of a handsome man. They are depicted as tall and broad-shouldered, and the nudes of the erotic albums show them with heavy chests and muscular arms and legs.

As a contrast I add here two woodprints that represent the ideals of feminine and masculine beauty that prevailed during the subsequent Ch'ing period. They are the work of Kai Ch'i (1774-1825), an artist who was specially famous for his paintings of human figures and flowers. The young man on



Figure 15

Lady on bench, resting her arm on a book
From the blockprint Tang-liu-ju-hua-pu. Author's collection

Figure 16 is Pao-yü, the boy-hero of the novel *Hung-lou-mêng* "The Dream of the Red Chamber";¹ a weak, thin youngster, much given to brooding. The girl on Figure 17 is one of the uncounted over-refined women figuring in the same novel. Under the Manchu occupation the martial arts were monopolized by the conquerors, and as a reaction the Chinese, and more especially the members of the literary class, began to consider physical exercise as vulgar and athletic prowess as suited only to the "Ch'ing barbarians", and Chinese professional boxers and acrobats. This change in the Chinese attitude supplies doubtless one of the reasons for the increasing tendency to eschew the physical aspects of love, and to stress sentimental, "literary" affection. The novels of that time mention young men becoming sexually excited by reading a poem written by a girl they have never seen, and love-pacts concluded on the basis of a literary correspondence or an exchange of poems. The ideal lover is described as a delicate, hyper-sensitive youngster with pale face and narrow shoulders, passing the greater part of his time dreaming among his books and flowers, and who falls ill at the slightest disappointment. His female counterpart is depicted as a frail child-woman, her long, thin face wearing an expression of continual astonishment; she has sloping shoulders, a flat chest, narrow hips and thin arms with long, excessively slender hands. The pairs are described as highly-strung, of quickly changing moods, subject to all kinds of real or imagined diseases, and as a rule they die young.

This change in the conception of the ideal lovers will have to be discussed in detail in a work dealing with the sexual life of the Ch'ing period. Here it may suffice to refer the reader to the valuable source material available in the *Hung-lou-mêng* mentioned above, and also the *Yü-chiao-li*—a minor novel not to be compared to the *Hung-lou-mêng*, but quite informative as to the "literary love" of that time.²

The detailed descriptions in the Ming novels, together with contemporary painting and book-illustration, and also the erotic woodprints that will be discussed at the end of this chapter, all these sources give full information on the dress and undress of the Ming dynasty.

¹ See the footnote on page 291.

² The *Yü-chiao-li* was translated into French as early as 1826 by Abel Rémusat, under the title "Les Deux Cousines". It became well known in Western literary circles of the second half of the 19th century, because of the "preciousness" of the characters, and because of the fact that in the end the hero marries simultaneously his two lady-loves. In 1864 Stanislas Julien published a closer translation, and also English, Dutch and German versions appeared. The *Yü-chiao-li* is not a great novel, but it stands as a good example of that particular genre. Moreover, chapter XIV is psychologically interesting because the hero Su Yu-po falls in love with the girl Lu Meng-li when she has disguised herself as a boy, and his first emotions on seeing her betray a pronounced homosexual strain.



Figure 16
Young man
drawing of ca. 1800
From the Ch'ing block-print Hung-lou-meng-t'u-yung



Figure 17

Young woman
drawing of ca. 1800
Same source as Figure 16

The man's garment closest to the body was a pair of wide trousers, not unlike those worn by the Chinese of today. In winter the ends of these trousers were fastened round the ankles and covered by leggings, in summer they were left loose. The man further wore a short jacket with long, wide sleeves, and over that a thin robe fastened with a silk sash wound round the waist. Over that he again wore another robe, often lined, and fastened by a leather belt. Officials had outer robes of heavy brocade, colour and design of which indicated their rank, and belts studded with jade plaques or gems. Their hair was still done up in a topknot, kept in place by hairpins. They wore gauze caps inside and outside the house, those were taken off only when inside the bedstead.

Women also wore wide trousers, but their most intimate article of dress seems to have been the *mo-hsiung*, a kind of broad brassière, fastened in front with buttons, or at the back with bands attached to the corners. The erotic woodprints prove that this was the only piece of clothing—apart from their stockings—that women kept on during the sexual act, if they did not strip completely naked. Figure 18, one of the illustrations Ch'iu Ying designed for the book *Lieh-nü-chuan* (see page 98 above), shows a group of women in various stages of undress. One notices the trousers fastened round the middle with a cord, and with the ends tucked under the stockings, and the brassières.

Over trousers and brassière the women wore a short jacket, buttoned in front, and with a high collar fitting closely round the neck. Then they wore several long-sleeved robes, number and material varying with season and social standing, with a sash round the waist, the ends of which trailed down in front. On top of those they often wore a shorter jacket, fastened in front with bands tied in an elaborate bow. Suspended from their sashes they wore small brocade bags with incense. Handkerchiefs and other small toilet articles they kept in the capacious sleeves of the inner robes.

Now a few words must be said about the pornographic novel, a literary genre that enjoyed great popularity in certain circles during the later years of the Ming dynasty.

Although quite a number of pornographic novels were written at that time, most of them disappeared in China during the Ch'ing dynasty, because of the strict censorship then in vigour. However, many survived in Japan, either in the original Ming prints, or in manuscript copies. Moreover, private collectors of the Ch'ing period had secretly kept some of them, and those were reprinted during the last years of that period when the central power of the Ch'ing



Figure 18

Women undressing
Same source as Figure 14

Imperial House was declining and censorship slackening, or during the early years of the Republic, especially in Shanghai.

One pornographic novel, however, was reprinted more than once, already during the Ch'ing dynasty, and continued throughout to enjoy a certain reputation. That was the *Jou-p'u-t'uan* "Prayer-cushions of the Flesh".¹ The author was Li Yü (literary name Li-wêng, 1611-ca. 1680), one of the most remarkable writers of the last years of the Ming dynasty, at the same time an able dramatist, poet, essayist, and connoisseur of women and elegant living.

Li Yü was born in a literary family and received a good education. He was destined for the civil service, but never got beyond the first literary examination. This failure must have been due to his refusing to conform himself to the scholarly fashion of that time, for he was a widely-read and excellent writer. He left a voluminous oeuvre, including an extensive collection of miscellaneous writings published in 28 chapters under the title *Li-shih-i-chia-yen*; ten theatrical plays some of which to-day still belong to the repertoire of the Chinese stage; and two famous collections of short-stories. He liked a bohemian way of life, and the Manchu conquest of China in 1644 robbed him of all ambition for an official career. He decided to make a living by his pen, and roamed over the greater part of the Empire, accompanied by a bevy of beautiful women and girls who constituted his private theatrical troupe. He and his suite were welcome guests in the mansions of high officials and wealthy patrons of the arts, he used to stay with them for weeks on end, having his troupe perform his own plays and himself taking part in the literary and artistic activities of his hosts. His fortunes varied, sometimes he was rich, then again he was so poor that he had to sell some of his favourite actresses. But he was always full of original ideas, and notably exercised a tremendous influence on the development of interior decoration and gardening. His ideas in this field were generally accepted not only in China, but also in Japan where present-day domestic architecture still shows the traces of his teachings.²

He was an avowedly sensual man who had throughout his career multitudinous amours with actresses, female musicians, courtezans and other

¹ In ECP and elsewhere I have wrongly translated this title as "Human Coverlets". Pu-t'uan means, next to coverlet, also "cushion for sitting on, placed on the floor" (Japanese *za-buton*), and the gātha which the abbot recites for Wei-yang-shêng in chapter 2 of the novel shows clearly that here the flat round cushion is meant on which Buddhist priests sit when meditating.

² Cf. my extensive discussion of Li Yü's activities in the artistic field in my book "Chinese Pictorial Art as viewed by the connoisseur", Serie Orientale Roma Vol. XIX, Rome 1958, p. 257 sq.

girls who accompanied him on his peregrinations. His writings prove that he took a deep and genuine—though often rather shortlived—interest in the women he was fond of, and spent a great deal of thought on their psychology and mental and material well-being. His shrewd understanding of the feminine character appears i.a. from his play *Lien-hsiang-pan* "Loving the Fragrant Companion", which has sapphic love as its main theme. Mrs. Shih Yün-chien, a young married woman, while visiting a temple meets a beautiful and talented young girl called Yün-hua. The two fall violently in love with each other, and Mrs. Shih promises the girl that she shall do her best to make her her husband's concubine, so that they will always be together. After many tribulations Mrs. Shih's scheme succeeds—to the delight also of Mr. Shih. The play contains much excellent poetry, and the dialogues—especially those between the two young women—are brilliantly written.

In the third section of Li Yü's *Ou-chi*, entitled *Shêng-jung-pu*, he gives a detailed account of the ideal woman: her charm, make-up, dress, and accomplishments. Part of this text, which consists of a collection of essays, has been translated by Lin Yü-t'ang (cf. his article "On Charm in Women", publ. in "China Critic", vol. XII, 1936), and also by W. Eberhard (cf. his article "Die Vollkommene Frau", publ. in "Ostasiatische Zeitschrift", 1939–40). These essays show Li Yü at his best, they are written in a fluent and witty style and contain a wealth of interesting details about life in the women's quarters of his time. Of special importance for our present subject is his treatise on sexual relations, found in the sixth section of the *Ou-chi*. There he says i.a. that a man should always do his best to spare his partner's feelings, and handle her with great circumspection when he has sexual intercourse with her for the first time. Li Yü stresses that this applies to all women without exception, no matter whether they are virgins or widows, ladies-born or prostitutes; for the first sexual congress means always more to a woman than to a man. And no matter how long the liaison lasts, and however frequently one sleeps with the woman, one should always endeavour to retain during the act something of the shy exploration that marked the first night together.

This delicacy, however, did not prevent Li Yü from writing a pornographic novel. This is the *Jou-p'u-t'uan* "The Prayer-mats of the Flesh", which all through the 17th, 18th and 19th century was very popular in both China and Japan. It describes in detail the erotic experiences of a young and talented scholar called Wei-yang-shêng, and of the six women who act as his partners. The hero's mentor in his amorous dalliance is a thief called Sai-k'un-lun; since his profession often obliges him to pass the night hidden in other people's bedrooms, he has acquired a wide and intimate knowledge of all aspects of sexual intercourse. Wei-yang-shêng puts the thief's teachings into practice,

and further expands his sexual experience by various experiments of his own. Thus the novel covers practically the entire field of sexual habits, and describes those in considerable detail and without mincing words. We shall see below that at the time certain sets of blasé literati liked to indulge in coarse pornography, and Li Yü was directly or indirectly connected with those milieus. Fortunately his great talent as a writer enabled him to make even this pornographic novel into a good story, and one with a moral, namely that indulgence in debauch may lead to Enlightenment. Therefore the novel is also referred to by the title *Chüeh-hou-ch'ian*, which means "The Zen (-enlightenment) beyond (ordinary) Enlightenment". This subtle moral, together with the excellent style, accounts for the great popularity the book enjoyed in both China and Japan. It was several times reprinted in both countries.¹

The *Jou-p'u-t'uan* contains numerous passages which do credit to Li Yü's psychological insight, and which throw interesting sidelights on the intimate relations and sexual behaviour of men and women of his time. Here I translate part of Chapter 3.

Wei-yang-shêng has obtained as principal wife Jade Perfume, the daughter of a well-known doctor of literature. Her father gave her a good literary education, but supervised her strictly so that she knew but little of worldly affairs. She was a beautiful girl, but completely ignorant of sexual matters, and this proved a great deception for the arduous Wei-yang-shêng:

As soon as he made some passionate remark to her, her face would grow red and she would hastily run off. Wei-yang-shêng had a great preference for engaging in sexual congress during day time, he loved to let the sight of the woman's private parts excite his lust. Several times he tried to loosen Jade Perfume's trousers during the day, but then she would start to protest loudly and make as if she was going to be raped, so that he had to give up those attempts. In the night she submitted to his embraces, but only because she felt that that could not be helped. And as to the postures, she always clung to the normal manner, refusing to try any variation. When he wanted 'to catch the fire across the mountain' (*ko-shan-ch'ü-huo* inserting the penis from behind), she protested that this must not be done because a wife is not supposed to turn her back on her husband, and when he wanted her to practise 'moistening the inverted candle' (*tao-chiao-la-chu* she sits on top of him) she said that this was impossible because it inverted the correct position of the male and female principles. It was only by assiduous efforts that he could

¹ The best Chinese edition is that published in 1943 at Peking by an anonymous author, as part of a small collection of reprints of erotic works entitled *Hsieh-ch'un-yüan ts'ung-shu*; the illustrations, however, are extremely poor. In 1959 the indefatigable translator of Chinese novels, Dr. Franz Kuhn, published a complete German version of this novel, under the title "Jou Pu Tuan, ein erotisch-moralischer Roman aus der Ming-Zeit (1634)" (Verlag Die Waage, Zurich).

bring her to place at least her feet on his shoulders. When reaching orgasm she did not cry out 'You kill me!',¹ 'My life!' or similar exclamations that flatter a man's prestige in battle, and even when he called her 'My dearest one' or 'My very life' she did not respond and acted as if she were dumb.

Wei-yang-shêng was greatly vexed at seeing Jade Perfume so irresponsible. He reflected that there was only one thing to do, namely set to work to educate her and thus effect the desired change. Thus the next day he went to an antique shop where he purchased an album of very cleverly painted erotic pictures. They were authentic specimens of Chao Mêng-fu's brush (the famous Yüan painter mentioned in Chapter IX). There were thirty-six pictures in all, corresponding to the line in the T'ang poem 'Spring reigns in all the thirty-six Palaces'. He thought that if he took this album home and leafed it through together with Jade Perfume, she would see the various methods of sexual intercourse and realize that these were not an invention of her husband, but practised already by the people of antiquity. He could prove the point by showing her this album as an actual model. When he brought her the album Jade Perfume had no idea what its contents were. She took the book and opened it. She saw that the first two pages were inscribed with four large characters which read: 'Lingering Glory of the Han Palace'. She reflected that in the Imperial Palace of the Han Dynasty there had been many sage Empresses and chaste ladies and she thought that this album would contain their portraits. She wanted to see what they were like. But when she turned the page she saw a man embracing a woman, both stark naked and engaged in the sexual act on an artificial rock. Her face grew red

¹ The Japanese sociologist Miyatake Gaikotsu has published a brief treatise on the exclamations of women when experiencing orgasm. He proves that those nearly always refer to death, and hence gave his treatise the title of *jakumetsu-iraku-kô* "Investigation into Annihilation experienced as Joy" (Tôkyô, n.d.).

Cf. also A. A. Brill, "Lectures on Psychoanalytic Psychiatry", New York 1955, page 290: "The close relationship between life and death has always been known and described by those who are interested in nature. Havelock Ellis states: 'Over a large part of nature, as has been truly said, but a thin veil divides love from death'. In the very beginning of her maternal fulfilment, during the act of conception, the human female reproduces, or mnemically speaking, ecphorates experiences of that philogenetic period when the coital act was the beginning of the end, when it, so to speak, ushered in death. I have often heard from men that during coitus, especially during orgasm, some women utter such exclamations as 'Oh, I am dying' or 'You are killing me' or 'Kill me' which they cannot explain in cold blood. May we not conceive these mystical exclamations as mnemonic expressions of situations which actually existed in, say Palaeozoic times, and which we still observe in some organisms?"

I may add that in ancient China existed the custom that when the son brings his bride home to his father's house for the wedding, during three days no music must be performed there "because the family thinks with sorrow of the future succession of the son to his father's place (after the latter's death)"; cf. *Li-chi*, section Tsêng-tzû-wên, I, 20, and p. 79 above. This custom too might be explained by the proximity of procreation and death, although one might also think of memories from pre-historic times of "the chief slain by his successor"—traces of which survive in Chou texts.

in sudden embarrassment. 'Where', she asked, 'did you get these unlucky things? They defile the women's quarters. Call a maid quickly and let her burn this!' Wei-yang-shêng held her back saying: 'This album is an antique worth a hundred silver pieces! I borrowed it from a friend to have a look at it. If you are prepared to compensate the hundred silver pieces, then go ahead and burn it. But if you can not pay the price, you had better put it down. I shall return it in a day or two when I am through with it.' Jade Perfume replied: 'What is the use of looking at such an unorthodox thing?' He answered: 'If this were really such an unorthodox thing, then why should the artist have painted it? Nor would the owner have been willing to pay so much for it. On the contrary, this album represents the most orthodox thing which has existed since the creation of the universe. That is why literati and people of learning have depicted it in full colours and had these pictures mounted with fine silk. Such albums are sold in antique shops and great scholars keep them on their shelves, in order that the people of later ages might know the right way of doing this. But for such albums, the reason of sexual intercourse would gradually fall into oblivion. Husbands would abandon their spouses and wives turn their back on their men. The line of creation would be broken off and mankind would disappear. To-day I borrowed this album not only for my own inspection, but also to acquaint you with these things. Learning how to conceive and become pregnant and give birth to sons and daughters, this certainly belongs to the study of the Right Way! Your father's only worry is that our union will not produce results. You would certainly not wish to cause him sorrow?' Jade Perfume answered: 'I won't believe that these antics are a proper thing to do! If they were, then why did not the great sages of antiquity in the beginning when they instituted our social order, teach us to do these things openly during the daytime, and in the presence of others? Why does one do it only in the deep of night and conceal it from others, acting like a couple of thieves? From this you can see clearly that these things are improper!' Wei-yang-shêng laughed and said: 'All this proves clearly that your father fell short in your education. He always kept you confined to the house, and without girl friends who could have told you a little about passion and love. Since you were always alone, you learned little of life, and remained ignorant of human affairs.'

After some further discussion Jade Perfume finally consents to look at the album. Wei-yang-shêng lets her sit in his lap, and together they inspect the pictures. The text goes on:

This album differed from the usual erotic pictures. The right half of every double page was taken up by the picture, while on the left half there was written a colophon. The first half of every colophon explained the erotic scene represented, the second half pointed out the particular artistic merits. Wei-yang-shêng read out the colophons to Jade Perfume in order to teach her the spirit of these pictures, so that they would later be able to put these examples into practice.

Then the texts belonging to five pictures are given. I only translate the explanation of the fifth one:

Fifth Picture. Posture of the Two Dragons tired of the Fight.

Explanation: The woman's head rests on the pillow, her arms lie by her side limp like a strand of silk. The man is resting his head on the side of the woman's neck, his entire body limp and relaxed. After the orgasm their souls seem to have left their bodies and now they are on the way to beautiful dreams. After the violent passion they have come to rest. The woman does not yet lower her legs; her feet are still placed on the man's shoulders in order to allow the desire to renew his movements to persist in him. If the artist had not added this subtle touch, the couple would seem to be dead. Thus the artist makes the observer realize the ecstasy of orgasm, when both man and woman as it were die together.

Having come to this point, Jade Perfume's passion had become greatly roused. Wei-yang-shêng turned another leaf and was just about to show it to her when Jade Perfume pushed the album away. Rising she said: 'What is the good of this book? It only hinders people when getting up. Look at it yourself, I am going to bed!

From then on Jade Perfume gradually becomes a lewd woman. Also Wei-yang-shêng starts to pursue other loves, and in the end becomes involved into serious trouble. He enters a monastery as a broken man, and becomes a devout Buddhist. The abbot explains to him that all his debauches had been necessary to make him attain enlightenment. He reached salvation by "the prayer-mats of the flesh".¹

We must now describe the special circle from which the other pornographic novels of the later Ming period emanated, and where also the albums with erotic colour prints were produced. In order to appreciate the background of that milieu, we shall have to survey briefly historical developments.

Ca. 1550 A.D., after about two hundred years of strong and successful rule, the great Ming Empire began to show signs of incipient decay. It had reached the apex of its power in the reign of the Emperor Yung-lo (1403-1424). Then the Ming armies marched till deep into Mongolia and Central Asia, kept the southern neighbours in subjection, and mighty Chinese fleets conducted naval operations along the coasts of Java and Ceylon. Towards the end of his reign, in 1421, Yung-lo removed the capital from Nanking to Peking, and there built the magnificent palaces that still stand to-day.

Yung-lo's successors, however, lacked his strong personality and military ability, they came more and more under the influence of the court-clique, especially the eunuchs. The latter grew increasingly powerful, with the results

¹ It is curious that in his précis of *Jou p'u-t'uan*, Van Gulik does not mention the most memorable element of the plot: Wei-yang-shêng undergoes a bizarre operation to improve his virility by grafting tissue from a dog's penis onto his own. Then at the end of the novel, in penitential desperation, he lops off his member. [PRG]

familiar from historical precedents: favouritism and wide-spread corruption. On the outside the Ming prestige seemed unimpaired, for its compact administrative machinery was so well organized that it worked on undisturbed for a long time even though the central authority was weakening. But the cogs were getting loose, an increasing number of key-positions was being occupied by incompetent creatures of the Palace-clique. The economic situation worsened, and along the frontiers several military setbacks occurred so that the boundaries of the Empire were imperceptibly shrinking. The Emperor Chêng-tê (1506-1521) dealt a blow to the power of the eunuchs, but under his successors Chia-ching (1522-1566) and Wan-li (1573-1619) they again obtained a stranglehold on the government. Capable ministers supported by the efficient lower ranks of the civil service succeeded in staving off major disasters, but the decay spread. At the same time, a vigorous nation of Tungusic descent, the Manchus, were consolidating a military régime in Manchuria, with Mukden as capital. As their strength increased they started casting covetous eyes on the rich Ming Empire in the south.

When the capital had been transferred to Peking, a certain number of artists and artisans had accompanied the court. But the majority had preferred to stay behind in Nanking and its surroundings, including such beautiful scenic cities as Hangchow, Soochow and Yangchow. Writers and artists were loath to leave the region where the artistic tradition went back to 1127, since the Sung dynasty moved south, and where they found surroundings more congenial than the intrigue-ridden atmosphere of Peking. Artisans also preferred to stay in a region where a long local tradition and natural resources facilitated the exercise of their craft. Thus not only most of the great writers and painters, but also the famous engravers of woodblocks for printing books and pictures, the skilled manufacturers of ink and paper, and of silk and brushes for painting and writing stayed behind in the south.

In this region, broadly called *Chiang-nan* "South of the (Yangtse) River"¹ lived a prosperous landed gentry whose fortunes were derived from the salt-monopoly and the brisk traffic along the Great Canal that connected the north and south of the Empire, and carried most of the official and private traffic. Further, there lived numerous wealthy merchants, including those in the port cities who profited from the thriving Japan-trade. Finally, it was in this region that settled down many retiring metropolitan officials from Peking who wanted to spend the rest of their days in peaceful leisure and in a milder climate. All these rich people patronized writers, artists and artisans. They

¹ In the T'ang dynasty Chiang-nan was the name of a province which comprised roughly S. Kiangsu, Chekiang, Fukien, Kiangsi and S. Hunan. Later, however, it was mostly used for the region referred to here.

liked a gay and debonair manner of living with much banqueting and feasting, so that also the courtezans and prostitutes flourished there as never before.

Famous was the brothel-quarter of Nanking, known as Ch'in-huai, named after the waterway it was situated on. The girls lived most of the time in the *hua-fang* "painted boats", luxuriously appointed floating brothels. Sumptuous banquets were held on board, enlivened by song and dance, and the guests could stay there the night. The Ming writer Yü Huai (1616-1696) has left a collection of reminiscences of the beautiful and accomplished girls of that quarter, entitled *Pan-ch'iao-tsa-chi*.¹ He calls this quarter the "Capital of the Immortals of the World of Lust". Another account is the *Ch'ü-li-chih* by P'an Chih-hêng, who flourished ca. 1570, and the *Ch'in-huai-shih-nü-piao* by his contemporary Ts'ao Ta-chang. The latter also wrote an account of the brothel-quarter in Peking, entitled *Yen-tu-chi-p'in*.² Equally famous were the "painted boats" of Soochow, described in the *Wu-mên-hua-fang-lu* by an anonymous author, and those of Yangchow to which the Ch'ing writer Li T'ou devoted an extensive treatise called *Yang-chou-hua-fang-lu*.³

¹ Reprinted in HYTS and other collectanea.

² These three texts are found in the sequel of SF, ch. 44.

³ Besides the brothel quarters in Peking, Nanking and the cities of Chiang-nan mentioned, also the floating brothels of Canton and Swatow were famous. In the T'ang dynasty Canton had been already an important centre of overseas trade, and had an extensive colony of other Asiatics; especially many Arabs had settled down there. In the Ming dynasty Canton became the great emporium of South-East Asia, and hence nightlife flourished greatly there. The prostitutes and courtezans of Canton belonged to a special ethnic group, the so-called *tanka* (*tan-chia*, also *tan-hu*), descendants of South-Chinese aborigines who had been driven to the coast and there engaged in fishing, especially pearl-fishing. They were subject to various disabilities, i.a. interdiction of marriage with Chinese, and of settling down on shore. They speak a peculiar dialect, and their women do not bind their feet. It was they who populated the thousands of floating brothels moored on the Pearl River at Canton. G. Schlegel has published a treatise on Chinese prostitution that is chiefly based on observations made there ("Histoire de la Prostitution en Chine", Rouen 1880; this is a translation of the original treatise in Dutch "Iets over de Prostitutie in China", Batavia 1866). Although unduly stressing the shadow side of the subject and although the historical part is limited to a few general remarks, this treatise has at least the merit of being based mainly on actual observations. Equally famous were the "flower boats" of Swatow, called *liu-p'êng-ch'uan* "six-sail (-mats?) boats", or also *li-p'êng-ch'uan* "Green-sail (-mats?) boats". The Ch'ing poet and official Yü Chiao has written an informative treatise on the brothels of Canton and Swatow, entitled *Ch'ao-chia-fêng-yüeh-chi*, printed in HYTS, 1st series vol. 4, with an appendix quoting older references. He records the slang used there, and the special customs attending defloration. He writes that the girls in Canton were less beautiful and accomplished than those of Swatow, and supports this opinion by quoting the great poet and connoisseur of women Yüan Mei (1716-1798). Yü Chiao also quotes the Ch'ing scholar Chao I (see p. 163 above) who relates the curious fact that, next to engaging in prostitution, the Swatow boats also carried on a thriving freight and passenger traffic along the S. Chinese waterways. He says that once a *chuang-yüan*, or candidate who came out first at the triennial examinations in the capital, travelled on such a boat without suspecting that it



Figure 19

Brothel scene (Ming)
Same source as Figure 14

青樓月
爭奇

前

三六



Figure 20

Brothel scene (Ming)

From the Ming block-print *Fēng-yüeh-chēng-ch'ī*, author's collection

These books give a good idea of the tremendous influence these quarters had on the cultural life in Chiang-nan. They were frequented by all the great scholars, writers and artists of that day who set a high standard for beauty and skill of the courtezans. In those milieus developed several new genres of singing and instrumental music that are still popular today.

However, this gay life was not without its darker sides.

During the preceding periods promiscuous intercourse with courtezans and prostitutes had not involved the risk of incurring a fatal venereal disease. As we saw in Chapter VII, some forms of gonorrhea must have existed already in early times. But till the later years of the Ming period the transmission of such diseases did not assume alarming proportions. The chances of infection were diminished by the cleanliness which the Chinese observed in their sexual habits. We know from Ming erotic novels that men and women used to wash their private parts both before and after the coitus, and lubricants used such as agar-agar jelly covered up small wounds and abrasions on the genitals and prevented infection. Men used occasionally a cover for the top of their member, called *yin-chia*, though rather to prevent conception of their partner than for hygienic reasons. However, in the beginning of the sixteenth century a syphilis epidemic cast a dark shadow over this insouciant life.

The beginning and spread of this dreaded venereal disease can be traced in a number of contemporary medical works.¹ The physician Yü Pien discusses in the sequel to his *I-shuo* (published 1545 A.D.) the medical properties of sarsaparilla, and then observes:

In the last years of the Hung-chih era (1488-1505) the population was ravaged by a bad skin-disease that started in Canton. Since the people of Central China had been unfamiliar with this disease, they called it *kuang-ch'uang* 'Cantonese sores', or also *yang-mei-ch'uang* 'plum-blossom sores', because they had a shape resembling plum-blossoms.

He gives an accurate description of syphilitic sores and the concomitant symptoms of the disease, and adds that sarsaparilla or also quick-silver will often give relief to the patients. His observations are confirmed by statements in other medical works of that time, some of which add detailed clinical histories of particular cases.

was a floating brothel. He discovered that only when a storm had caused a leak in the roof-mats, and a beautiful woman dressed only in a red-satin brassière walked in to repair it. He kept her in his cabin throughout the journey, and after they had parted that woman called herself "the *chuang-yüan's* wife" and charged double prices. The writer sagely observes that the entire incident was probably provoked with that end in view.

¹ The pertinent Chinese texts have been collected and discussed in Dr. Keizō Dohi's excellent study "Beiträge zur Geschichte der Syphilis, insbesondere über ihrer Ursprung und ihre Pathologie in Ostasien", Tōkyō 1923.

A second epidemic occurred ca. 1630, and is described in detail in the *Mei-ch'uang-pi-lu* "Secret Account of Rotting Sores", a medical work published in 1632 by the physician Ch'ên Szû-ch'êng. All these sources call the disease either *kuang-ch'uang* or *yang-mei-ch'uang*. As regards the latter term, since Chinese physicians clearly recognized that the main cause of infection was sexual intercourse, I think that the reference to 'plum blossom', next to shape and colour of the sores, was also suggested by the sexual associations of the plum, mentioned on page 275 above; however, *mei* is also written with a character of the same pronunciation but meaning "mould, rot". At present *mei-tu* "plum poison" (Japanese: *bai-doku*) is still the common term for syphilis in China and Japan.

These facts, however, were chiefly known in medical circles, the people at large considered syphilis as but one of the many dangerous epidemic diseases such as smallpox, plague etc. that at regular times ravaged the country.

In Chapter VII it was observed that Ming novels and short stories make mention of low-class brothels, the inmates of which were called by the contemptuous term of *p'iao* "harlots". We have a few remarks by Western observers on this subject. The Portuguese missionary Gaspar da Cruz says about the situation in Canton which he visited in 1556: "The common women (i.e. prostitutes. v.G.) are in no wise permitted to dwell within the walls. And in the suburbs without they have their proper streets where they dwell, out of the which they may not live—something which goes against the grain with us. All the common women are slaves, being brought up for this purpose from their childhood; they buy them of their mothers, and teach them to play the viols and other instruments of music and to sing. And those that can best do this, because they gain most, are worth more. Those which cannot do that, are worth less. The masters either deflower them or sell them. And when they are to be set in the street of the common women, they are written by an officer of the King in a book, and the master is bound to come every year with a certain fee to this officer; they are bound to answer their master with so much every month. When they are old, they make them seem young girls with painting and rouge. And after they are not for that trade, they are altogether free, without any obligation to the master or anybody, and then they feed upon that which they have gotten".¹ Elsewhere da Cruz speaks of blind women acting as harlots; he says: "The blind women are the common women, and they have nurses that do dress them and paint them with vermillion and ceruse, and receive the wages of their evil use".² I have found no confirmation of this in Chinese sources, probably da Cruz mistook one particular case for the

¹ C. R. Boxer, op. cit., pages 150–151.

² C. R. Boxer, op. cit., page 122.

general rule. As to his remark that houses of ill-fame were located outside city-bounds, this applies exclusively to low-class brothels. All better-class houses, including restaurants and wine-houses providing female company, were found inside the city; in the case of the P'ing-k'ang quarter of the T'ang capital, even close by the Imperial Palace.

Such information on venereal disease and low-class prostitution must be culled from Chinese medical books and from notes left by foreign observers. The refined artists and literati of Chiang-nan blithely ignored those dark aspects of life "among the wind and flowers"; they devoted themselves wholeheartedly to the cult of elegant living. And it cannot be denied that it was mainly through their efforts that in Chiang-nan artistic Ming culture took a truly sublime flight.¹

However, through these assiduous efforts the cult of elegant living achieved such a high degree of perfection that the saturation point was reached. Some scholar-artists grew tired of writing highly polished poetry, the sporting with sophisticated courtezans palled on them, and the choice delicacies and rare wines ended by boring their jaded palates. Moreover, news trickling in from the north told them that there were signs of the glorious Ming dynasty drawing near its end, and reminded them of the impermanence of all worldly pleasures. Some reacted to this *fin-de-siècle* atmosphere by retiring to a mountain-resort and devoting themselves to abstruse Buddhist and Taoist studies. Others, on the contrary, engaged in a feverish quest for new excitement, and gave themselves over unreservedly to a life of dissipation.

The latter group found a perverse pleasure in ordure, they wrote the most obscene novels, using the erotic slang of the street, and interspersed that coarse prose with the most elegant erotic verse. They stressed repulsive physical details of the sexual act, so that many passages in their stories are mere scatology. Together with the high quality of the verse, the only redeeming feature of these novels is that they never have recourse to sadistic and other pathological excesses: even those writers, surfeited with sensual pleasure as they were, never tried to stimulate their lust with flagellation or other sadistic or masochist practices.

We shall describe here three of those novels, each of which is representative of one particular genre.

Undiluted pornography is the *Hsiu-t'a-yeh-shih* "Unofficial Records of the Embroidered Couch". It was written by a gifted young poet of the Nanking milieu called Lü T'ien-ch'êng (ca. 1580-1620). During the last decades of the Ming dynasty this book was published in no less than three separate editions. The famous scholar Li Chih (1527-1602), who was later executed because of

¹ Cf. my extensive discussion in ECP, vol. I, Introduction.

heterodox teachings, added a commentary, and the equally famous story-writer Fêng Mêng-lung (died 1644) edited the text. The plot of this novel is of extreme simplicity. It concerns a candidate of literature named Yao T'ung-hsin who has a beautiful wife but at the same time has homosexual relations with a younger colleague called Chao Ta-li. After Yao T'ung-hsin's wife has died, he marries a lewd young girl referred to by her maiden-name as Mrs. Chin, who soon has a liaison with his friend Chao. Chao's mother is a young widow called Mrs. Ma, who is infatuated with Yao T'ung-hsin. The contents of the novel are nothing but a detailed description of the sexual orgies in which these four people engage together, in all the combinations one could possibly imagine; the young maid-servants of the Yao-mansion occasionally fill in lacunae. In the end Mrs. Chin, Mrs. Ma and Chao Ta-li die an untimely death, and Yao T'ung-hsin repents and enters a monastery. The only value of this novel lies in its vigorous colloquial style and the *tz'ü* and *ch'ü* poems at the end of each chapter, while the many slang terms used are interesting from the linguistic point of view. This novel is representative of the genre where the plot serves only as frame-work for a series of obscene descriptions.¹

The second novel, the *Chu-lin-yeh-shih* "Unofficial History of the Bamboo Garden", is also decidedly pornographic, but it contains a carefully worked out plot, based on the teachings of the old handbooks of sex. It proves that the members of the particular milieu from which emanated these novels were still familiar with those handbooks. Their teachings, formerly freely mentioned as rules for a healthy sex-life, now began to be considered as referring to forbidden pleasures, and as such fascinated the seekers of new excitements.

Nothing is known about the author of the *Chu-lin-yeh-shih* beyond the fact that internal evidence shows that he must have been a member of the circle of Lü T'ien-ch'êng mentioned above. During the Ch'ing dynasty this novel was placed two times on the Index of forbidden books, but it was reprinted in Shanghai in the early years of the Republic. I reprinted specimen passages in ECP, folio 193-198.

The scene of this novel, which counts 32 chapters, is laid in the distant past, about 600 B.C., the so-called "Spring and Autumn Period" of the Chou dynasty.^{1a} Mu, Prince of the Feudal state of Chêng, has a beautiful daughter called Su-ngo. Upon reaching puberty she meets in a dream a Taoist adept, who initiates her into the secrets of sexual intercourse.² He says to Su-ngo: "For fifteen hundred years I have been engaging in disciplines on the Chung-

¹ Full information on the *Hsiu-t'a-yeh-shih* will be found in ECP, vol. I, pp. 128-132.

^{1a} This novel is based on the famous tale of Lady Hsia in the *Tso-chuan*, described on p. 31, above. [PRG]

² This reminds one of the beginning of the Ch'ing novel "The Dream of the Red Chamber" mentioned above, where the hero Pao-yü is also initiated in the arcana of sex during a dream. The late-Ming pornographic novels largely influenced Ch'ing fiction.

nan mountain. After I had become an Immortal I adopted the name of Pu-hua-chên-jên. Even if my lust is roused I never emit semen. I also possess the art of absorbing woman's vital essence while I control my own. Therefore whenever I copulate I can exhaust all the pleasures of the act. I can supplement my *yang* with the woman's *yin*, thus expelling old age and continually rejuvenating myself. This is called the 'Plain Girl's Method of Reaping the Results of Battle.' After this dream Su-ngo sets out on her amorous career. She first seduces a young cousin and also lets him have her maid Ho-hua, whom she has taught the secrets of the Taoist. Soon the cousin dies of exhaustion, while the two girls become ever more beautiful because of the vital essence they have extracted from him. Then Su-ngo is given in marriage to the son of Prince Ling of the neighbouring state Ch'ên. In his mansion there is a bamboo grove, *chu-lin*, where Su-ngo sports with her young husband. After she has borne him a son, her husband also dies from exhaustion, on his deathbed entrusting his widow and infant son to the care of his friend, the Minister K'ung Ning. Su-ngo establishes sexual relations with K'ung, and also with his friend, the minister I-hsing. In order to safeguard his own position, K'ung arranges a meeting between Su-ngo and her father-in-law, the old Prince of Ling. Thereafter that Prince also joins in the sexual orgies in the Bamboo Grove, in which the maid Ho-hua takes an active part too. Twenty years later Su-ngo and Ho-hua still look like young girls but their lovers have grown old and weak. One day, Su-ngo's son, who has grown to be a strong warrior, overhears the old Prince and his two ministers joking about who of the two sired the boy. Su-ngo's son rushes inside and kills the Prince. The two ministers escape and take refuge in the enemy state of Ch'u. The Prince of Ch'u had long planned to attack Ch'ên and now the murder of the Prince provides him with a good pretext. Su-ngo's son is killed in battle and she herself taken captive. K'ung Ning and I-hsing plan for her to seduce the Prince of Ch'u, but they are haunted by the ghost of Su-ngo's son. Before they can carry out their plan K'ung's mind becomes deranged. He kills his own wife and children and then himself. I-hsing ends his life in despair by drowning himself.

At the court of Ch'u there is a minister called Wu-ch'ên, an expert in the sexual methods of strengthening the vital essence by sexual intercourse. He once meets Su-ngo and immediately recognizes in her a fellow-student. He wants to marry her but the Prince of Ch'u has given her already in marriage to a common soldier, and she has become separated from her maid Ho-hua. A most involved inter-state intrigue follows which is described with considerable skill. Wu-ch'ên betrays the Prince of Ch'u to another Prince, and Su-ngo and her maid go through a series of complicated adventures. In the end Wu-ch'ên succeeds in becoming a minister of the state of Chin, and finally is

united with Su-ngo and Ho-hua. These three experts in sexual disciplines need young partners to supply them with vital essence. Wu-ch'ên succeeds in making a young nobleman of Chin together with his wife join in their orgies. Thus the Bamboo Grove is re-established in Chin—this time with two men and three women. A servant betrays them and denounces them to the Prince, who has Wu-ch'ên's mansion surrounded by his soldiers. The nobleman and his wife are arrested, but Su-ngo, Ho-hua and Wu-ch'ên have already absorbed so much excess vital essence that they have completed their "Inner Elixir". Transformed into Immortals, they disappear into the sky shrouded by a cloud of mist.

In this novel thus the teachings of the old handbooks of sex are debased to a kind of sexual vampirism.

This trait appears all the more clearly in the third novel to be treated here, the *Chao-yang-ch'ü-shih*. Neither the *Hsiu-t'a-yeh-shih* nor the *Chu-lin-yeh-shih* were illustrated. But the *Chao-yang-ch'ü-shih* has no less than 48 full-page illustrations, most of which represent erotic scenes. The author signed himself only with his penname, but here again internal evidence shows that he was connected with the circle mentioned above. The book was printed in 1621.

The main character in this novel is a female fox who lives in a mountain grotto, as the ruler of all other foxes. For uncounted years she has been engaging in Taoist disciplines in order to obtain the Elixir of Immortality, but she is still lacking the "Original Yang"—the pure male vital essence—necessary for completing her own *yin*. She therefore assumes the shape of a beautiful young girl and descends into the world, seeking a suitable male victim. She meets a young man who is, in reality, a swallow which has also advanced far in sexual disciplines, but who is still lacking the "Original Yin". They have intercourse together, during which the fox succeeds in stealing the swallow's essence. When the swallow discovers the identity of his partner he is furious and summons his swallows for a battle. The magical world is shaken by the colossal clash between hordes of swallows and foxes. The Jade Emperor of the Taoist Heaven intervenes and condemns the two troublemakers to an existence on earth as ordinary human beings, as punishment for their sins. They are born during the Han dynasty as twin-daughters resulting from an illicit relation between a certain lady and her husband's catamite. The swallow-spirit and the fox-spirit grow up as beautiful girls who, after many adventures, enter the Palace and become consorts of the Emperor Ch'êng. The Emperor falls ill because of the orgies with these two lewd partners of his couch, and is finally killed when Fei-yen—the swallow spirit—gives him an overdose of an aphrodisiac. The story ends with the two again being summoned before the Jade Emperor and receiving exemplary punishment.

In this novel three different elements have been woven together. The main plot is sexual vampirism, a perversion of the old Taoist disciplines. Then there is the element of fox-lore. As was explained at the end of Chapter VII, this lore flourished during the T'ang dynasty, and developed even further in the Ming and Ch'ing periods.¹ Third, there is the historical element of the love of the Han Emperor Ch'êng (32-7 B.C.), and the sisters Chao Fei-yen and Chao Ho-tê, two singing girls who were taken into the seraglio and soon became the Emperor's favourite consorts (cf. BD no. 151). The romantic details of this love story had been worked out in the *Chao-fei-yen-wai-chuan*, a historical novelette of the T'ang period.

Elsewhere I have collected all the evidence proving that these three novels were written in one and the same milieu, namely the circle of blasé literati in Nanking.² There I have also shown that it was in this same milieu that originated the large-size erotic albums.

Before we go farther into these particular albums, a few words must be said about the historical background of Chinese erotic art.

In the above were mentioned the pictures of "Secret Dalliance", *pi-hsi-t'u*, of the T'ang and Sung dynasty, and also the fact that the Yüan painter Chao Mêng-fu had the reputation of being an expert in painting those. We have also seen that the late-Ming novel *Jou-p'u-t'uan* describes an erotic album attributed to that artist.

Our knowledge about pre-Ming erotic painting is scanty. Personally I have never seen anything older than Ming copies, which though pretending to be drawn after T'ang and Sung originals, had all the features that characterize Ming erotic art. However, literary references such as Chang Ch'ou's description of the picture attributed to Chou Fang quoted on p. 201, give to understand that already in the T'ang period those erotic representations had become separated from the handbooks of sex, the original illustrations of which seem to have become lost in or about that time. Thereafter erotic pictures were not any longer exclusively meant for instruction, but also for amusement.

Since no reliable specimens seem to survive, it is difficult to form an opinion on style and artistic qualities of pre-Ming erotic art. There is one erotic album

¹ For later times there is ample material on fox-lore in the collection of tales of the supernatural entitled *Liao-chai-chih-i*, translated by H. A. Giles under the title "Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio", London & Shanghai 1909. Cf. also M. W. de Visser, "The fox and badger in Japanese folklore", Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan, vol. XXXVI (Yokohama 1909).

² Cf. ECP, vol. I, pp. 128-135.

of ca. 1630, the *Fan-hua-li-chin* (see below) that is still closely connected with old sexological texts. The nudes depicted there are of small size, and clumsily drawn. If those are paraphrases of pre-Ming erotic art, one would conclude that that art was rather primitive, and faulty in the anatomical details.

Material for comparison is therefore scarce. Although the modern source *Ku-tung-so-chi*¹ states that in tombs from as early as the Han period tiles with sexual representations were found, and that such were also painted on shells, I have never seen actual specimens of those. The same source mentions porcelain wine-cups of the Ming period, decorated with sexual representations. Chinese books on porcelain state that such were particularly popular in the Lung-ch'ing (1567–1572) and Wan-li (1573–1619) eras.² The specimens I saw in 1936 in Peking dated from the Hsüan-tê era (1426–1435). Those cups measured only 6 cm. in diameter, and the pairs of naked men and women engaged in the sexual act painted on the outside were very poorly drawn.

In the middle of the Ming period the better erotic painters did not do nudes. Some painters of that time did draw larger pictures of erotic scenes, but there the people appear fully dressed, in the style later in that period used by Ch'iu Ying; plates XVI and XVII probably still represent the early-Ming style. If those artists wanted to give their pictures a more pronounced suggestive character, they added an inobtrusive obscene touch. On a painting representing for instance a couple standing by the window and looking out into the garden, the artist would add among the foliage of the trees a pair of copulating insects, or small animals copulating in the grass. Or they would paint a woman embroidering a piece of silk, with her lover sitting close by her, or again a man moistening his writing brush on the inkstone, with his lady-love sitting next to him. Since *hsiu* "to embroider" has the double meaning of "engaging in sexual intercourse (of a woman)", and *shu* "to write" the double meaning of "having sexual intercourse (of the man)", such paintings are highly suggestive. Also in Ch'ing erotic prose and poetry expressions as *ai-hsiu* "to love embroidery" may indicate a lustful woman, and *t'an-shu* "coveting writing" may mean a man intent on sexual congress.

The development of the nudes on the late-Ming woodprints that shall be discussed below shows also that until the last years of the Ming dynasty nude-painting was primitive. If this art had reached a greater development during preceding periods, specimens of it must have become lost before the advent of the Mings.

¹ Cf. *Ku-tung-so-chi* (mentioned on p. 201 above), ch. 4, page 26 b. ECP folio 169 quotes a Ming source to the same effect.

² Cf. references in St. Julien, "Histoire et Fabrication de la Porcelaine Chinoise", Paris 1856, page XLVIII and page 99.

The only artists who achieved some proficiency in representing the nude female body were the ivory-carvers. The rules regarding the separation of the sexes precluded even doctors seeing their lady-patients face to face. They were only allowed to feel the pulse of the patient, extended to them from behind the bed curtains. Since according to ancient Chinese medical science the pulse supplies sufficient indications for diagnosing practically every kind of disease, that examination was supposed to be all a physician needed. However, in order to explain to him the exact location of the woman's complaints, the husband or a female relative could point out those spots on the ivory model of a naked woman that a doctor always carried with him. These "medical ivories" usually measure about 10 cm. in length, and represent the woman lying on her back with her hands behind her head (see Plate XVIII). Some of these Ming ivory figures are very well done, and evince a good knowledge of the female anatomy.¹

Erotic pictures of the Ming period were as a rule mounted either as horizontal hand scrolls, or as folding albums in accordion-style. The former mostly showed one continuous picture of men and women engaged in the sexual act, representing the various postures; such scrolls are about 10 inches high and from ten to twenty feet long. Pictures intended for being mounted in the form of albums were as a rule not larger than eight inches square. They were painted in series of 24, 36 or some other number that represented a literary reference (see page 304 above), and in the album were alternated with sheets of paper or silk inscribed with erotic poems. Whatever their artistic merits, the owners of such scrolls or albums grudged no expense in embellishing them. The hand scrolls were mounted with silk borders and the protecting flap at the beginning made of antique brocade, complete with a fastening-pin of carved jade or ivory. The albums had covers of carved wood, or antique brocade stiffened with a sheet of cardboard. The novel *Chin-p'ing-mei* gives at the end of ch. XIII a brief description of an erotic scroll picture in the possession of the hero of that novel, Hsi-mên Ch'ing, and said to have emanated from the Palace collection. It says:

In the Palace this scroll had been provided with borders of figured silk, an ivory fastening pin and a brocade band (for winding round the scroll when rolled up) completing its adornment. The pictures are painted

¹ Four specimens are reproduced in "Les Ivoires Religieuses et Médicales chinoises, d'après la collection Lucien Lion", Paris 1939. The Ming scholar Shên Tê-fu (1578-1642) states in his *Pi-chou-chai-yü-t'an* that jade-workers used to make erotic statuettes which were greatly sought after, and that in Fukien Province ivory carvers made small figures of pairs in sexual congress which were of high artistic quality (text ECP folio 170/5-6). I have seen no specimens of such Ming products, but figurines made during the Ch'ing period which I examined were mostly of inferior quality.

with a liberal use of mineral blue and green, and the outlines drawn in gold, entirely unsoiled and of perfect beauty. The women vie with the Fairy of the Wu Mountain (see page 40 above), the men are handsome as Sung Yü (see p. 38). In pairs they practise the 'battle' within the bed curtains, 24 postures each with its special name. The spring-mood excites the passion of the observer.

These early and middle-Ming erotic scrolls and albums did not satisfy the blasé members of the artistic and literary circles of Chiang-nan of the later part of the Ming period. In their pornographic novels mentioned above they had described the beauty of their women with the utmost realism, now they wanted them depicted in the nude, unreservedly showing their intimate charms. They wanted nudes in all positions, painted more correctly than those of the scrolls and albums then in circulation, and of larger size. However, there were no previous works that answered these high standards. Chinese painting had then already for many centuries been studio-painting, except in the case of portraiture the artists did not work from nature. Not to speak of drawing after living nudes, of which I know only one example (cf. p. 61 above).

There was, however, one artist in Chiang-nan who took the lead in improving the painting of naked women. That was T'ang Yin, the famous painter mentioned already above. He was notorious for his love of wine and women, and was always prepared to make new experiments. Many anecdotes relate to what lengths he would go to obtain a woman who had caught his fancy, indulging in all kinds of pranks and practical jokes.¹ He was a regular guest in the famous brothel-quarters in Chiang-nan, and wrote a treatise on sporting with courtezans entitled *Fêng-liu-tun*.²

This work does not seem to have survived, but we have a collection of pornographic stories compiled by T'ang Yin, entitled *Sêng-ni-nieh-hai* "The Ocean of Iniquities of Monks and Nuns".³ It contains 26 shorter and longer stories about the debauch going on in Buddhist temples, interspersed with some excellent erotic verse in the *tz'ü* metre. The introductory poem reads:

Despite specious talk about the monks' 'felicity',
They are in reality but lustful rascals.
Donning the black robe and shaving their heads,
They certainly represent an awful appearance.

¹ An entertaining account is given in a small collection of notes on T'ang Yin's private life, entitled *Chi-t'ang-liu-ju-i-shih*, and printed in HYTS 20th series vol. 4.

² Cf. *T'ai-p'ing-ch'ing-hua*, a collection of notes by the prolific Ming writer Ch'ên Chi-ju (1558-1639).

³ The *Sêng-ni-nieh-hai* seems to survive only in Japanese manuscript copies. Mine consists of two folio volumes of 42 pages each, written in indifferent hand but on fine Chinese ornamental paper. The first story is entitled Sha-mên T'an-hsien, and the last Wang-ho-shang.

But they are bald both above and below,
 The baldpate below vies with the upper one in shine.
 Both bald and both shiny—
 Every monk has indeed two bald heads.
 Their eyes glitter as those of rats coveting fat,
 They twist like leeches intent on sucking blood,
 Feeling for an opening they call a sweet maiden
 And reveal the true shape of Buddha's Tooth.
 The Pure Land has changed into a sea of lust,
 Monk's cowls get entangled with silken skirts.
 They crazily talk about Hell being difficult to avoid,
 Yet they do not fear the account-book of King Yama.¹

The sexual references are so obvious that they need no further comment. The book is written in excellent literary style. The sexual terms used in the text are all derived from the old handbooks of sex and the Taoist manuals for sexual alchemy, proving that in the circle of T'ang Yin and his friends all those books were still widely read. I mention especially the seventh story, entitled *Hsi-l'ien-sêng* "Monks from the West". There T'ang Yin narrates the activities of the Tibetan monks introduced by Ha-ma to the Yüan emperor (see page 260 above); the description of their sexual orgies quotes *verbatim* the "Nine Positions" of the *Hsüan-nü-ching*, translated already on pp. 141-143 above.

Both from the viewpoint of artistic ability and personal proclivities, no one was better qualified than T'ang Yin for painting erotic pictures. He evidently persuaded some of his lady-loves to act as model, and thus could depict large-sized nudes that are ably drawn, and do credit to T'ang Yin's powers of observation.

A few years later the great artist Ch'iu Ying followed his example, and started to paint next to his pictures of fully dressed lovers also pairs in the nude.

Thus the members of the Nanking circle found in the works of T'ang Yin, Ch'iu Ying and their disciples the models they needed. But they were hard to please, and ordinary paintings of nudes did not satisfy their exacting taste. Searching for the medium best suited for recording those nude charms, they chose the colourprint.

Printing in colours had already been practised long before their time. As early as the T'ang dynasty small sheets of paper destined for writing

¹ Yama (Chin. Yen-lo-wang) is the King of the Nether World who keeps account of all the sins committed by men on earth so as to be able to mete out adequate punishment to them after death.

poetry on were struck off in two or three colours from blocks engraved with ornamental designs. And paper-shops had used the same technique for printing crude votive pictures that were pasted on the wall at the time of seasonal festivals. In the Ming dynasty publishers used the colour print too, they often printed the text-page of a book in black, but the marginal comments in red or blue. It was not until the end of the Ming period, however, that this technique, called in Chinese *t'ao-pan*, was further developed. During the last two or three decades of that dynasty this art flourished in the north, in and around Peking, and also in the Chiang-nan region, near the old capital Nanking, in the south. In the North the centre of this industry was Yang-liu-ch'ing, a village near Tientsin. There were produced colourprints of a religious character; pictures offered to friends and relatives on festive occasions; and prints of auspicious subjects, to be pasted on to the wall as decoration. This was an unpretentious, popular art; but since there was a steady demand for it, the industry has continued to flourish in Yang-liu-ch'ing, all through the Ch'ing dynasty and the Chinese Republic.

The same popular colour-prints were produced in Chiang-nan. But next to those—the work of artisans—Chiang-nan also produced more refined colour-prints, designed by great artists and famous literati. It was they who developed the Chinese colour-print to its final perfection.

The credit for this unprecedented achievement must go mainly to Hu Chêng-yen (1582–1672), an amateur of seal-engraving who worked in Nanking. He published two collections of colour-prints, which to-day still are considered as superb works of art. One, called *Shih-chu-chai-hua-pu* "Painter's Manual of the Ten Bamboos Studio" is a collection of colour prints of flowers, fruit and rocks, each accompanied by a poem.¹ The second, the *Shih-chu-chai-chien-pu* "Poetry-paper of the Ten Bamboos Studio" is a choice collection of ornamental paper.² In these two works Hu Chêng-yen utilized to the full the rich possibilities of the colour print, both its clear-cut, modulated linear technique and the delicate nuances of the colour-areas.

This was the medium the amateurs of erotic art had been looking for. Since some of the members of their circle wrote poems for Hu Chêng-yen's Painter's manual, evidently this great colour-print artist had connections with that group, and no doubt they profited by his technical advice. They now had the right models and the right technique, and could set to work to produce erotic

¹ Sixteen prints are reproduced in colour in J. Tschichold, "Neue Chinesische Farbendrucke aus der Zehnambushalle", Basel 1943.

² The Jung-pao-chai, the well known firm specializing in colourprints in Peking, published in 1952 a fine reprint of this album, struck off from blocks newly engraved after the original Ming print, which is exceedingly rare. The modern Chinese expert on the history of Chinese woodblock printing Chêng Chên-to added a preface.

albums that would be far superior to anything done in this field before, and that would answer their high esthetic requirements. The earliest albums date from ca. 1570, the last from ca. 1650. Thus this special art lasted but eighty years; but it set a standard that was never surpassed.

All these albums have approximately the same form. They consist of long strips of paper, folded accordion-wise, every folded page measuring about 10 inches square. The album usually begins with an ornamental title page, then follows a preface, and thereafter the series of colour-prints. The page opposite each print bears a poem belonging to it, often executed in excellent calligraphy.

The editors of the albums chose a printing technique that is even more difficult than that of ordinary colour prints. As is well known, the old-style Chinese printing method employed for both books and pictures is the opposite of that used in the West. They put the block with the engraved side up, ink it with a pad or a large brush, then place the paper atop the block and smooth it out over the inked surface. The proper inking of the block, and exercising just the right degree of even pressure on the paper—these are the secrets of the Chinese printer that can be mastered only after many patient experiments and long practice. In the case of colour prints one and the same sheet of paper had to be impressed upon several blocks in succession, one block for every colour occurring in the print. The printer's main difficulty was the proper adjustment of the various colour areas, however carefully the printing was done, there always was a small margin of error. But in the case of the ordinary colour print such minor faults did not affect its beauty. The ordinary colour print consists of a "master design" of one colour, comprising the main features of the subject represented. This monochrome "master design" is struck off first, then supplemented with a number of colour areas until the complete print is achieved. Even if these colour areas do not tally exactly with the master design, the unity of the picture is not broken.

However, the editors of the erotic albums wanted colour prints executed entirely in linear technique, and with practically no colour areas. That means that there is no master design that holds the entire picture together, the picture being a combination of several linear complexes, each having its own colour. It follows that in case of faulty adjustment of the blocks, the design will fall apart and the picture will be spoilt. But the enormous labour involved in engraving and striking off these linear blocks was amply rewarded. The exclusively linear technique lends to the prints of the albums an ethereal quality that could never be achieved by the ordinary combination of linear technique and colour areas. Evidently the editors of the albums realized that the linear technique would save the nudes from becoming vulgar, and would enhance the beauty of their elegant curves. It seems that early in the

history of this particular genre there developed a tradition as to the correct distribution of the colours. The faces of the nudes represented, their hairdress, the caps and shoes of the men, and the outline of their bodies is usually done in black. The next prominent colour is blue, used for the outlines and folds of clothes, for some pieces of furniture, and for the frame enclosing the picture. Third come red and green, the former used especially for tables and chairs, and both together for ornamental patterns of dresses, borders of mats and screens, flowers etc. Last comes yellow, employed for small objects such as tea cups, incense burners, vases etc.

The early erotic albums printed ca. 1570-80 are printed in four colours; black and blue dominate, red and green are used sparingly, and yellow is missing. The best prints, produced between 1606 and 1624 are printed in five colours. These represent the heyday of the erotic colour print, which lasted only about twenty years. Thereafter these five-coloured albums were reprinted in cheaper, monochrome editions, either entirely in black or entirely in blue. The later albums were designed and printed in one colour only, mostly black or red. Then, after the advent of the Ch'ing dynasty in 1644, this art ceased altogether. Original specimens of it are now exceedingly scarce.

We shall now describe briefly five of these albums, each of which is representative for one stage in their development.

One of the earliest albums is the *Shêng-p'êng-lai* "Supra-Paradise". It consists of fifteen prints in blue, black, red and green, and dates from the Lung-ch'ing era (1567-1572). Here one notices a marked diffidence in delineating complete nudes: in most of the prints the men and women are partially dressed, only their hips and genitals being exposed. The nudes show incorrect proportions, usually the upper part of the body is too large for the legs. Calligraphy and style of the accompanying poems are mediocre.

In a few decades the quality of the prints quickly improved. This is proved by the album entitled *Fêng-liu-chüeh-ch'ang* "Summa Elegantia", that contains 24 pictures and was published in 1606. The nudes in this album are skilfully painted, and often in complicated positions. As stated in the preface, these prints are based on pictures by T'ang Yin, whose style is easily recognizable. I here translate the preface of this album.

Since I do not belong to the school of Master Têng-t'u,¹ how would I dare to discourse on erotic matters? However, on a spring day of the

¹ Master Têng-t'u is mentioned in an essay by the poet Sung Yü (cf. note on page 68 above).

year 1606 when I was reading in my Myriad Flowers Library, a friend from Soochow came to see me. He brought a scroll entitled 'Pictures of Spring Battles', painted by the artist T'ang Yin. I never tired of studying them. Thereafter the master of the Mei-yin Studio of Soochow came to see me. He said to me: 'There exist scores of erotic picture albums printed by book sellers, but none of those can compare with this scroll in originality and artistic quality. The pictures are both bold and charming, of complete beauty. Moreover, they treat the subject exhaustively.' I thereupon sought a skilled artist and had him copy these pictures, all the twenty-four positions. Poets and penmen vied with each other in composing verses for them. Then I changed the name of the series into 'Summa Elegantia', and entrusted it to a good engraver. In the middle of autumn he had finished the printing blocks. Thus I spent many a day of plotting and planning before the present work was completed, but I was firmly resolved to publish this album so as to make it available to all erudite connoisseurs within the four seas. As to its artistic merits I venture to say that this album is superior to ordinary works of this kind. The discerning reader will decide this point for himself.

Written by the Retired Scholar 'Ailing Crane', of Tung-hai.

Blocks engraved by Huang I-ming, of Hsin-an.

(text Folio 141)

I could not identify the literary names occurring in this preface, nor the signature. Huang I-ming, the artist who carved the blocks, was a member of the famous Huang-clan of wood engravers, of Shê-hsien in Anhui Province. Plate A (frontispiece recto) reproduces the seventh picture of this album. One sees a young scholar wearing an official cap, dozing at night by the library window. He has apparently fallen asleep over his book. His lady-love is standing behind him, her hand on his shoulder. On the left one sees a large bronze candlestick, on the table a small incense burner, a flower vase and a tea cup; in the background part of a folding screen, decorated with a mountain landscape. The poem on the album-leaf opposite the print reads:

Rousing the Dreaming Lover

The warm fragrance of the flowers floats in the night,
But he is fast asleep by the window of the library.
She has come alone, evidently with a purpose,
Her tapping his shoulder betrays her urgent passion,
Her pushing him proves her special reason.
She tries to rouse him from his Dream of Butterflies,
Or perhaps of flying from the mountain on a Phoenix?
'I could kill that hateful man!
His soul is roaming elsewhere and he does not stir!'

(text Folio 144/12)

The title of the poem, and the sixth line refer to the well-known story told about the Chou philosopher Chuang-tzû. At the end of the second chapter of the work that bears his name it says: "Formerly I dreamt that I was a butterfly, freely fluttering about, just as it liked. I did not know that it was I. Suddenly I awoke and realized that I was I. Now I wonder whether I dreamt that I was a butterfly, or whether I now am a butterfly, dreaming that it is I". The seventh line refers to the story of the musician Hsiao-shih, mentioned on page 110 above. Evidently it means that the lady suspects her lover of dreaming about another woman.

The twentieth picture of this album is reproduced on Plate XIX, it depicts the mood of the "après". Man and woman have just left the couch and are dressing. The woman is tying the cord of her skirt—printed in such pale yellow colour that it is not visible on the reproduction. The man holds her jacket ready for her to put on. The bedmat is woven in a swastika-design, which is the traditional pattern for the cover of a couch. On the right one sees a table with an antique bronze flower vase, and a seven-stringed lute. Note the bed-curtains of heavy brocade. The accompanying poem reads:

Awakening from a Spring Slumber

The 'Clouds' have dispersed on the Wu Mountain,
The 'Rain' has passed in the fragrant women's quarters,
Who knows the boundless passion of the game they played?
She looks as lovely as the Empress leaving the bath,
Slowly she is tying the cord of her embroidered skirt,
She seems cross at having been roused from her slumber.
Her tired limbs cannot bear the burden of garments,
She is too lazy to take up herself her apricot robe.
From under her curved eyebrows she gazes at her lover,
Dazedly her thoughts still dwell on their passionate union.

(text Folio 148/8)

For the sexual meaning of "clouds and rain", and of the Wu mountain, see page 38 above. The fourth line refers to the Consort Yang Kuei-fei bathing with the Emperor in the hot-spring resort, as mentioned on page 191 above.

Unfortunately these two are the only woodprints fit for publication in a book meant for general circulation. They may suffice, however, for giving the reader an idea of their artistic quality.

The third album to be discussed here represents the apex of the erotic colour-print. It bears the title of *Yüan-yang-pi-pu* "Secret Handbook for Devoted Lovers", and was published in 1624. It contains no less than thirty

pictures, printed in five colours, each accompanied by a poem in excellent calligraphy. Unfortunately none of the pictures and none of the poems are fit for publication. I translate, however, the preface, which contains much information.

The Book of Changes (*I-ching*) says: 'The sexual union of man and woman gives life to all things' (see page 22 above). How true this is! Why then are people unable to control their lust and consider the sexual union as a mere source of pleasure, thus transforming the Gate through which we entered this life into a Gate of Death? Alas!

Now Chao Mêng-fu painted the 'Twelve Postures', T'ang Yin the 'Six Extraordinary Positions', and Ch'iu Ying the 'Ten Glorious Positions'. Their intention was thereby to save those who are going under in the degeneration of this art. When Master K'ung-k'ung composed his 'Collected Writings describing Passion', was this not also because he aimed at assisting those unfortunates?

Amateurs have made many collections of erotic pictures. I have now selected from among those the ones which pleased me, and I have arranged them in a series, presented hereafter, and naming it 'Pictures of Verdurous Spring'; this series comprises thirty pictures, I hope that people will not think that I entered this field under the false pretense of ability. As regards the designing of the various postures and the care bestowed on every detail, I think I may be satisfied with my work.

Those who awakened to the Truth will, when unfolding these pictures, thereby learn to control their lust so as to be able to guide their sexual urge. Then the eternal cycle of procreation (referred to in the Book of Changes) will not be broken. Who would ever brand this album as a mere source for amusement, meant only to gladden ear and eye? Therefore I say: It is Spring that inspires all emotions. What need I say more?

Written in the 1624, by the Master of the Peony Studio.

On the work of "Master K'ung-k'ung" I could find no further details. Apparently the editor first called the album "Pictures of Verdurous Spring", then later changed it into "Secret Handbook for Devoted Lovers" (literally: Mandarin Ducks). It is important that here three erotic scrolls are mentioned, together with their titles, and painted by Chao Mêng-fu, T'ang Yin and Ch'iu Ying. It seems that the simile of the "Gate of Life being transformed into a Gate of Death" was a popular one at that time. On page 288 above we found it also in the prefatory remarks to the novel *Chin-p'ing-mei*.

The text of none of the three albums discussed above has any direct bearing on the old handbooks of sex, or on the Taoist manuals of sexual alchemy. We shall now, however, describe an album that is nothing but an illustrated Taoist manual, with fanciful poetical additions.

This Taoist erotic album is entitled *Fan-hua-li-chin* "Variety of Elegant Scenes of Luxurious Enjoyment". It consists of four parts, and was published

ca. 1630. The first part bears the general title *Hsiu-shu-yang-shên* "The Art of Nursing Body and Spirit"; this is a modified version of the Taoist handbook *Hsiu-chên-yen-i* which was discussed *in extenso* in the beginning of this chapter. The second part, entitled *Fêng-hua-hsüeh-yüeh* "Erotic Scenes of the Four Seasons" gives fourteen pictures of the sexual act, each accompanied by two poems, the first a *ch'ü* "chanted verse", the second in regular metre, of four lines, of seven characters each. The third part is called *Yün-ch'ing-yü-i* "Essentials of the Clouds and Rain", and gives 36 different positions, each accompanied by two explanatory poems, as in the preceding part. Finally, the fourth part is entitled *I-fêng-i-su* "Strange Manners and Outlandish Customs", 12 positions with accompanying poems.

As was remarked already above, in the general discussion of erotic art, the nudes of this album are considerably smaller than those in the others, and clumsily drawn. It is not impossible that this album represents a—very late—paraphrase, in the course of the centuries copied out again and again, of a Taoist illustrated manual of sexual alchemy of the T'ang dynasty; except of course for the poems, which are clearly added by the Ming editor. Although the album is negligible from the artistic point of view, it may prove to be historically important. But until more similar material is forthcoming, this problem can not be decided.

Some of the *ch'ü* in this album are quite well written. Since the language is nearly pure colloquial, these poems have a simple straightforwardness that lends them a special charm. I translate one hereunder:

I think you are wholly adorable
 Your spring-skirt revealing your thighs
 Makes my passion hurt me.
 I think your waist resembles a willow,
 Your fragrance that of the orchid,
 And your face a flower—
 Not one bit different!
 Night and day you are in my thoughts!
 When shall we get drunk on Ambrosia, Ambrosia?
 One moment of this spring night
 A thousand goldpieces can not buy!

(text ECP, vol. I, page 200)

The fifth and last album to be discussed here consists of pictures only, there is no text at all. It is entitled *Chiang-nan-hsiao-hsia* "Whiling away the Summer in Chiang-nan", and printed in monochrome, a reddish-brown

colour. It is the last known specimen of the Ming erotic colour print, dating from ca. 1640-50.

The design is of the highest quality, the nudes show delicate and faultless drawing. The artist has spent also much care on their surroundings, especially noteworthy is the fine furniture of carved blackwood represented. Several of the prints, however, contain a surreptitious element that marks them as specimens of a decadent art. The other albums have, together with a stark realism, a straightforward quality that saves them from becoming obscene. But the Chiang-nan album stands for a rapidly deteriorating art, it represents the final phase of the erotic colour print. Perhaps it is best that this art ended when it did. It tended to become dominated by a spirit of sly obscenity that could barely be compensated by its high artistic quality.

For a more detailed description of the above and other erotic albums that emanated from the Nanking circle, illustrated by reproductions of specimens of prints representative for each stage in their development, the reader is referred to ECP, second part of vol. I. Here I confine myself to the following general remarks.

It is to be noted that there is no trace of flagellation, or any other sadist or masochist practice. Interesting is also the absence of references to male homosexuality. Further, while the persons who sponsored these albums took, as we have seen above, special delight in expatiating in their pornographic novels on scatological details, in their albums this element is conspicuous by its absence. Their innate sense of pictorial beauty prevented them from marling the erotic colour prints with unesthetic details.

The nudes, both male and female, are drawn in a realistic manner, and of normal anatomical proportions; one does not find here, for instance, the male member of exaggerated size so characteristic for both older and later Japanese erotic prints and pictures. The male nudes are strongly built, with broad shoulders and thick necks, and well covered with flesh. The male member is always depicted with the prepuce drawn back so that the glans is completely exposed. Pubic hair is sparse and covers only the small area directly surrounding the member. The female nudes are characterized by heavy hips and thighs, but comparatively thin arms and lower legs. They have large breasts, but no preference for a special form is noticeable; some have the firm, round breasts of Western classic art, others pointed or hanging ones. Typical is the well-developed *mons veneris*, clearly separated from the rounded belly. Pubic hair is sparse and limited to a small area, mostly only a tuft of hair directly above the top of the vulva. If the clitoris is indicated at all, it is of small size. Both men and women have little axillary hair.

As regards the artistic technique, attention may be drawn to the excellent

treatment of the facial expressions, which reproduce for instance the emotion caused by the orgasm with staggering realism. Though there are slight differences in the general treatment of the nudes, many details prove the existence of a stereotyped artistic convention. I mention heads and hands drawn with the consummate skill engendered by a long tradition, the mouth represented by a V-shape with a point underneath (cf. Plates A, frontispiece recto, and XIX), or as a V lying on its side; the navel represented by a figure resembling the letter A, etc. In the polychrome prints the nudes are outlined in black, only occasionally are the private parts printed in red.

For the benefit of sexologists I here tabulate the sexual habits as revealed by these prints. The table is based on a dozen erotic albums of that period examined by me, all together containing about three hundred colour prints. The percentage indicates the frequency of each motif depicted.

25%	normal position; woman's legs spread, or encircling the man's waist, or raised with the feet on his shoulders. Man reclines on woman, or, more rarely, kneels between her thighs.
20%	woman on top, straddling man or crouching on him, facing either his head or feet.
15%	woman reclines with raised legs in a chair or on a bench, sometimes a table; man stands in front.
10%	man inserts member from behind, the woman kneeling in front of him.
10%	introitus per anum, man standing and woman leaning over high table. Once man sits on bench, woman in his lap with back to him.
5%	pair lying side by side facing each other.
5%	pair crouching close together, or woman sitting on man's crossed legs, in bath tub or on round cushion.
5%	cunnilingio.
3%	penilingio.
1%	freak-positions, as of one man with two or more women; position commonly called "69"; woman rocking in swing, etc.
1%	sapphic pairs.

It may be added that about half of the prints represent the pair only, and the other half the pair accompanied by one or more other women, watching or assisting the pair.

I think that sexologists will agree that the table reproduced above represents a good record of healthy sexual habits. All the more so if one takes into consideration that erotic pictures offer their designers full scope for expressing wishful thinking, and for indulging in abnormal fantasies. And also that the table applies to sexual habits when Chinese society and culture went through a stage of over-development, and when moral standards were at a low ebb.

Despite their small number and limited circulation, these late-Ming erotic



Figure 21

Bedstead

From the early-Ch'ing block-print Liu-ho-wei-so-yen, author's collection

colour prints, through their superior qualities, exercised an enormous influence on erotic art, both inside and outside China. During the Ch'ing period these colour prints were used as models for erotic paintings all over China. Their influence is noticeable in South-Chinese book illustrations of ca. 1700 (see Figure 21), and in the prints produced 1700–1800 in Yang-liu-ch'ing, the centre of colour-printing near Tientsin, far up in the north.¹ Their designs can be recognized even in the abominable, vulgar pornographic pictures sold in the 19th and 20th centuries in China's port-cities. Evidently the Ming albums circulated secretly during the first decades of the Ch'ing period, and thereafter in second- or third-hand painted copies. At present original Ming erotic colour-print albums are of the greatest rarity; only about twenty originals survive, partly in China, partly in Japan.

Since Ningpo and other centres of the Ming trade with Japan were located in Chiang-nan, the erotic albums soon after publication found their way also to that Island Empire. There these prints were eagerly studied and copied by Japanese print-makers of the Gen-roku era (1688–1703). The great woodprint master Hishikawa Moronobu even published a Japanese adaptation of the entire *Feng-liu-ch'ieh-ch'ang* album, in a monochrome reprint. The first page, and picture 20 of this impression are reproduced in K. Shibui's *Genroku-kohanga-shūei*, Part I (Tōkyō 1926). Also the later *ukiyo-e* prints show the influence of the Chinese albums in technical details, such as the drawing of hands and faces, notably the mouth represented by a horizontal V-shape.

Thus these albums, primarily meant only for the delectation of a small group of blasé men of letters, and for recording a few brief moments of bliss passed among the "wind and flowers", lived on long after the ephemeral,

¹ Erotic pictures were not made exclusively for sexual instruction or for amusement, but also to be used as amulets. The sexual act representing the life-giving *yang* power at its apex, pictures of it were supposed to frighten away the *yin* forces of darkness. Until recent years it was customary, especially in North China, to paint a sexual representation on the lining of the *tu-t'ou*, the triangular stomach-cloth of small children. And booksellers used to keep one or more erotic prints in their shop to prevent fires and other disasters; hence the term *pi-huo-t'u*, "Pictures guarding against fires", a euphemistic expression for erotic representations. Both in China and Japan such prints were also placed in clothes-boxes to keep insects away. The Japanese term *kyōtei-bon* meaning "erotic picture" would seem to refer to this custom since it means literally "books kept under in the box".

For the sake of completeness I mention here also the erotic "double folding fans". These seem at first sight ordinary folding fans of the usual type, with a landscape or flower painting on the obverse, and a poem on the back. But every single rib has a double strip of paper pasted on to it that remains hidden if the fan is opened in the customary way, that is from left to right. If, however, one opens it from right to left, the reverse of each double strip becomes visible, and the strips form together an erotic picture. Especially those of the Ch'ien-lung era are often quite well executed, and based on the designs of the late-Ming erotic colour-prints.

elegant fin-de-siècle society in Chiang-nan had been swept away by the Manchu conquest. Though avowedly sensual, these colour prints have a tenderness of expression and a delicate charm that place them among the finest specimens of erotic art.

In the above the erotic literature and the erotic colour-prints of Chiang-nan were described at some length, because in subsequent centuries there was never again unfolded such a complete and candid picture of sexual life; a picture, moreover, the background of which was a milieu that represents traditional Chinese culture at its apex.

The Chiang-nan material stresses again the fundamental concept determining the ancient Chinese attitude to sex, namely an unreserved, joyful acceptance of all the varied aspects of human procreation, ranging from the smallest biological details of carnal congress to the most elevated spiritual love of which that congress is the seal and confirmation. Viewed as the human counterpart of the cosmic creative process, sexual intercourse was looked upon with reverence, and never associated with moral guilt, or sin. The cosmic prototype hallowed the flesh, never considered as an abomination. No difference was felt between, for instance, the rain sprinkling the fields, and the semen fecundating the womb; or between the rich, wet soil ready for the seed, and the moist vagina of the woman prepared for sexual congress. Further, in the polar ideology of *yin* and *yang*, woman had her appointed place: second to man, but only in so far as Earth is second to Heaven, Moon to Sun. No sin attaches to her biological function, on the contrary, it makes her the Gate of Life.

As to those men in Chiang-nan who chose to make woman a Gate of Death, they consciously went against the cosmic rhythm, at their own peril. But does not the very abandon of their debauch betray a lingering hope to reach thereby in the end salvation, Enlightenment through "the prayer-mats of the flesh"? Even in the coarsest pornography of this time one perceives, between the lines, a yearning to retain what is so recklessly squandered, to abide with what is so blatantly denied. In the last instance crass sensuality tends to merge with the most subtle mysticism, the two being separated only by "the thin veil dividing life from death".

Above it was stated that the Chiang-nan material affords the modern observer the last chance to obtain a full picture of uninhibited Chinese sex-life. With the crumbling of the Ming Empire the robust pleasures of these full-blooded men and women faded away, their buoyant spirit evaporated, sex tending to become a burden rather than a joy. After 1644 A.D., when the Manchus had conquered China, the Chinese withdrew into themselves, they walled in both their homes and their minds, in a determined attempt at

maintaining at least their spiritual and cultural independence, after their political independence had gone. They indeed succeeded in locking the alien conqueror out of their private life. Whether in doing so they did not lock in even more dangerous elements, is a question I leave to students of sexual life during the Manchu dynasty to decide.

The downfall of the Ming dynasty illustrates the ancient Chinese saying that "a beautiful woman can overthrow an Empire". A quarrel over a concubine caused a rift between the two great Ming generals who together could perhaps have staved off the impending Manchu conquest.

The malpractices and exactions of the corrupt court in Peking had caused wide-spread economic distress, and discontent was brewing, especially in the north-west. In 1640 a popular leader called Li Tzû-ch'êng (1606-1645; BD no. 1226) raised the banner of revolt in Shensi Province. He was an able strategist who soon assembled a formidable army. He marched on Peking, many disgruntled army-leaders flocking to his standard. The best Ming troops, under the famous general Wu San-kuei (1612-1678; BD no. 2342) were standing far up in the north, to halt the threatening invasion of the Manchu armies. Therefore the Court could not bring sufficient troops in the field to withstand Li Tzû-ch'êng's onslaught. In 1644 he occupied Peking, and the last Ming Emperor committed suicide. Li Tzû-ch'êng proclaimed himself Emperor of a new dynasty.

When Li Tzû-ch'êng had occupied Peking, however, Wu San-kuei's father had been killed, and Li had taken Ch'ên Yüan-yüan, Wu San-kuei's favourite concubine, into his harem. When he refused to give the beautiful girl back, Wu San-kuei decided to make common cause with the Manchus to oust Li Tzû-ch'êng. The latter was defeated by the combined forces of Wu San-kuei and his new allies, he had to flee from Peking and was killed.

Once inside China, the Manchus soon took the upper hand over the divided Chinese. They established themselves as the masters of North China with very little fighting, and transferred the capital of their northern realm from Mukden to Peking, preparing to break the stubborn resistance in the south. While the Manchu troops started operations there against the loyal Ming generals, in Peking the Manchu regent Dorgon (1612-1650) worked out together with Wu San-kuei and Chinese advisers as Hung Ch'êng-ch'ou (1593-1665) and Ch'ên Ming-hsia (1603-1654) the rules for Sino-Manchu relations in the occupied areas. It was agreed that intermarriage between Chinese and Manchus would be forbidden—a decree that remained in force all through the Ch'ing dynasty till the Empress Dowager Tz'û-hsi revoked it in 1905. It was further agreed that while the Chinese men would adopt Manchu dress, shave their heads and wear the queue, dress and habits of Chinese women should not be interfered

with. On the other hand Manchu women were forbidden to follow Chinese dress or adopt the custom of binding their feet. Much chagrined at being denied this mark of beauty, the Manchu women found a solution in wearing wooden clogs the lower part of which had the shape of the Chinese Golden Lotus feet.

Faced for the second time with a protracted period of foreign occupation, the Chinese re-applied the Confucianist principles on the separation of the sexes in their utmost severity. Determined to keep at least their private life free from Manchu interference, everything pertaining to sexual relations and the affairs of the women's quarters became strictly taboo. Chinese officials exhorted their Manchu masters—originally burdened with few sexual inhibitions—to place erotica of the Ming and preceding periods on the Index, and in course of time the Manchu rulers became even more punctilious in this respect than the Chinese themselves. In this manner developed the Chinese phobia regarding the divulging of sexual matters, a phobia that has characterized the Chinese attitude to sex throughout the last four centuries.

The Manchu generals gradually subdued also the south of China, and thus began the Manchu or Ch'ing dynasty that was to rule China till the national Revolution of 1912.

With the founding of the Manchu dynasty in 1644 we have come to the end of our survey.

Everytime one studies a Chinese subject in its historical setting, one is again struck by two distinctive features: the astounding resilience of the Chinese race, and the remarkable cohesive force of Chinese culture. During a period of more than two thousand years, one sees again and again a partially or entirely foreign-dominated or internally divided China recuperate as it were overnight, and in an amazingly brief space of time transform itself back again into a unified, independent nation with a homogeneous culture.

This phenomenon amazes the foreign observer, but it never amazed the Chinese, who take it simply for granted. The Chinese never believed in the permanence of their Emperor and their dynasties, whose mandate lasted only as long as "Heaven above and the people below" wanted it to last. But they did and do have an unshakable belief in the permanence of their race and their culture. *Wan-sui* "Ten thousand years!", the time-honoured formula for greeting the Emperor, was not addressed to a divine being but rather to the man who, as *primus inter pares*, at that particular time symbolized their race and their civilization. In honouring their Emperor the Chinese consciously honoured themselves, their race and their culture. The only race and culture that—in their view—were worthy of the name, the only civilization that would never perish.

Those who define Chinese civilization as static are right in so far that its fundamental principles are indeed so. The Chinese outlook on life, founded on the conception of living in harmony with the primordial forces of nature, has indeed persisted with signal constancy throughout the succeeding centuries. But because of the very fact that the basis is static, the Chinese whenever necessary could afford to effect themselves drastic changes in the superstructure, or suffer such changes to be effected through or by alien forces. And thereby this fundamentally static civilization proved to be in fact an extremely dynamic one.

In both older and later times the Chinese have made concessions to alien influence. They have recognized—though often reluctantly—that alien civilizations did have features that could profitably be adapted, and they have also proved to be perfectly capable of effectuating such adaptations, once they had set their mind on doing so. For the Chinese believe in renewal, provided it is substantially self-renewal, and they believe in growth, including even pruning and grafting, provided that the tree itself is never affected. They are willing to accept foreign influence, even temporary domination if necessary, because of their supreme confidence in the strength of their blood and of their numbers, and their conviction that in the end they will always conquer the conquerors, both in the material and the spiritual field.

And the course of history seems to bear out this supreme confidence. While other great civilizations perished, theirs remained; and while other races disappeared, dispersed or lost their political identity, the Chinese survive in ever increasing numbers, and retain their identity, both racial and political.

The historian must try to analyze such phenomena, he must study the underlying political, economical, social and moral factors. In doing so, however, it must always be realized that it is not given to us to penetrate till the ultimate reason of the growth and decay of civilizations, just as we shall never know the ultimate reason of life and death of individuals.

Yet, in the case of China, a historical survey of Chinese sexual relations, the mainspring of life, makes one incline to the belief that it was primarily the careful balancing of the male and female elements—studied in China as far back as the beginning of our era—that caused the permanence of Chinese race and culture. For it would seem that it was this balance that engendered the intense vital power that, from remote antiquity to the very present, has ever sustained and renewed the Chinese race.

APPENDICES

ADDITIONAL ABBREVIATIONS USED IN APPENDIX I

- BI "The Indian Buddhist Iconography, mainly based on the *Sādhana-mālā* and cognate Tāntric texts of ritual", by B. Bhattacharyya. Second ed., Calcutta 1958.
- GKY "Goraknāth and the Kānpaṭa Yogis", by G. W. Briggs. Publ. in the series "The Religious Life of India", Calcutta 1938.
- ITB "An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism", by S. B. Gupta, Calcutta 1958.
- LTF "On a Tantrik Fragment from Kucha", article by Prof. Sylvain Lévi, in "The Indian Historical Quarterly", vol. XII (1936).
- ORC "Obscure Religious Cults as background of Bengali literature", by S. B. Gupta, Calcutta 1946.
- PSH "The Śāktas, an Introductory and Comparative Study", by E. A. Payne. Publ. in the series "The Religious Life of India", Calcutta 1933.
- SHSH "Shakti and Shākta", essays and addresses on the Shākta Tantrashāstra, by A. Avalon. Third revised ed. Madras & London 1929.
- SM "Sāadhanamālā", Sanskrit text published by B. Bhattacharyya, in Gaekwad's Oriental Series. Vol. II Baroda 1928.
- SP "The Serpent Power", being the Shaṭ-chakra-nirūpaṇa and Pādukā-pañchakā, two works on Laya-yoga, translated from the Sanskrit, with introduction and commentary, by A. Avalon. Fourth ed., Madras & London 1950.
- TIC "Tantrism in China", article by Chou Yi-liang, in "Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies", vol. 8, 1944-45.
- TPR-N "Preliminary Report on two scientific expeditions in Nepal", by Prof. Giuseppe Tucci. Published in Serie Orientale Roma, vol. X, Rome 1956.
- TPR-S "Preliminary Report on an Archaeological Survey in Swat", by Prof. Giuseppe Tucci. Publ. in "East and West", New Series vol. 9, Rome 1958.
- TPS "Tibetan Painted Scrolls", by Prof. Giuseppe Tucci, vol. I, Rome 1949.
- WIL "A History of Indian Literature", by M. Winternitz. Two vols., Calcutta 1927.

APPENDIX I

INDIAN AND CHINESE SEXUAL MYSTICISM

In Chapter VI of the present volume I discussed the basic Taoist discipline of "making the semen return", and in Chapter VII quoted the treatise by the T'ang physician Sun Szû-mo and other T'ang texts describing its technique in greater detail. Sun says that the semen activated by the *coitus reservatus* is made to flow upward along the dorsal column, adding that in the abdomen this "translated semen" is visualized as a red sun and a yellow moon which are raised along the dorsal column till they have reached the *ni-huan* spot in the brain. There sun and moon unite, and the text gives to understand that this union constitutes the final transformation of the "translated semen", namely its changing into the Elixir of Life. After having quoted there texts, I remarked in passing that the Taoist disciplines resemble closely a psycho-physical process practised in later Indian Buddhist and Hindu sexual mysticism, generally referred to as Tantrism.¹

In this Appendix, I propose to treat this resemblance in greater detail, beginning with a brief description of the process as advocated by the Buddhist Vajrayāna, followed by an account of the parallel practices of the Hindu Śāktas. On the basis of a comparison of the Indian and Chinese data we shall then try to formulate a theory regarding the historical connection between Indian and Chinese sexual mysticism.

The Vajrayāna, the "Thunderbolt Vehicle", is a late development of the Mantrayāna, the "Spell Vehicle". As is indicated by the latter's name, that

¹ Most Orientalists use the term Tantrism in the broad sense of denoting all Hindu and Buddhist magic and sorcery; if one adopts this wide scope of the term, then the Atharva-veda might also be called "Tantric". Others want to limit its scope to teachings embodied in all texts technically called "Tantra"; but that would mean that the term includes various non-religious subjects, such as for instance grammar and astronomy. Other Western writers again employ the term freely to designate all and everything in Indian religion and its practices that offends their own standards of morality and decency. Since this indiscriminate use gives rise to considerable confusion, I prefer to reserve the terms "Tantrism" and "Tantric" exclusively for those schools of Hindu and Buddhist thought that consider sexual congress as the main means for reaching salvation. It is in this strictly limited sense that I use the term on these pages.

Mahāyānic doctrine centred round the *mantra*, magic spells and incantations, also incorporating numerous Hindu-Buddhist elements interlarded with local, non-Aryan cults. The Vajrayānists, while adopting this mass of heterogeneous beliefs and rituals, added again new elements, including next to local Indian traditions also new, outlandish thoughts. The main point of their philosophy was that the ultimate Truth resides within the human body, and that consequently "the human body is the best medium through which Truth is to be realized" (ITB, p. 3). For the body contains the "spark of life" which through a meditative process can be made to flare up into a fire that destroys the duality of sex and thereby identifies the practitioner with the deity, making him one with the ultimate power in the universe, the Void.¹

As paramount symbol of this new doctrine they chose the *vajra* (Chin. *chin-kang*, Jap. *kongō*, Tib. *rdo-rje*), the adamantine, indestructible Thunderbolt, identified with *śūnyatā*, the final, indestructible Void. In iconography this mysterious weapon² is represented as a kind of double sceptre, with one, two, three or more prongs at either end. Until the rise of the Vajrayāna its only claim to distinction was its function of weapon of Indra, who therefore is also called *Vajrapāṇi* "Wielder of the Vajra". The Vajrayānists, however, raised it to the position of symbol of their entire doctrine. It became the counterpart of the Hindu phallic pillar, the *liṅga*, absorbing all of the latter's manifold associations, including the plain meaning of the male sexual organ.³ Since then the word *vajra* has become the most widely used adjective of Buddhist

¹ For a balanced, well written summary of the philosophical background the reader is referred to TPS, the chapter "The Religious Ideas: Vajrayāna", p. 209 sq. ITB supplies valuable technical details, based upon researches in unpublished Vajrayānic manuscripts.

² Many Indianologists consider the vajra as an importation from the Hellenistic world; this view has been set forth *in extenso* by A. Grünwedel in his "Buddhist Art in India", London 1901, p. 90 sq. One might think also, however, of the influence of the *brahmadaṇḍa* "Brahma's staff" of Hindu priests. S. Lévi quotes passages from Mantrayānic manuscripts from the 7-9th centuries discovered in Kucha, where this staff is described as a real magic wand used in sorcery and witch craft; on the island of Bali (Indonesia) the *brahmadaṇḍa* is actually a vajra-staff (cf. P. H. Pott, "Yoga en Yantra", Leyden 1946, Plate XV). Another possibility worth considering is the close connection of *thunder* and *mushroom*—the latter being a well-known phallic symbol. As in many other countries, so also in India is the growth of mushrooms, *śūṇḍhva*, ascribed to thunder and lightning. Cf. the informative article on this subject by R. Gordon Wasson, in: "Antiquity and Survival", vol. III no. 1, The Hague 1960.

³ As such the vajra is also called *maṇi* "the (indestructible) jewel", that penetrates *padma*, the lotus flower, symbolizing the vulva. A Tantric text says: *strī-ndriyaṃ ca yathā padmaṃ vajraṃ puṃsindriyaṃ tathā* (*Prajñāpāya-viśāyā-siddhi*, quoted ITB, p. 106; cf. also WIL, Vol. II, p. 388). There can be little doubt, therefore, about the meaning of the much-discussed Lamaist prayer formula *om̐ maṇi padme hūṃ*. Since sexual mysticism is the essence of the Vajrayāna, one need not wonder that the formula designating both mystical and carnal sexual congress in succinct form came to occupy such a predominant place in Tibetan religious practice.

Tantrism; added to names of deities, to book titles, to philosophical terms and to designations of ritual objects, it sets those apart as belonging to Vajrayānic doctrine and practice.

Next to this new symbol, the Vajrayāna also adopted a new supreme deity to head its enormous pantheon, viz. the Ādi-buddha, the great Original Buddha, of whom all other gods and godlings are but a fragmentary reflection. This Ādi-buddha, initially identified with *Vajra-sattva* "Vajra Essence", had under him five comprehensive "families of Buddhas" (*kula*), the first of which was headed by Vairocana. Identified with the Ādi-buddha, this Vairocana became the foremost god of the Vajrayānic pantheon, called Mahā-vairocana (Chin. *Ta-jih*, Jap. *Dainichi*), the "Great Luminary", that is the sun, as ultimate symbol of all-prevading light and creative Power. He thrones supreme in the centre of both the Vajradhātu and the Garbhadhātu maṇḍala, the Double Magic Circle that graphically represents Vajrayānic esoterism.¹ Evidently the Vajrayānists did not want to fill this highest place in their divine hierarchy by adopting an already existing sun god, such as Sūrya, or Viṣṇu or Śiva in their solar aspects. Therefore they created an entirely new godhead out of one the many Sanskrit words for sun, viz. *vairocana* (from the root *ruc* "to shine forth"), used in Hinduism i.a. as a name of Viṣṇu, and of a son of Sūrya. *Vairocana* means "belonging to the sun".

The third novelty introduced by the Vajrayāna was a highly specialized sexual mysticism, based on the principle that complete unity with the deity and supreme bliss could be achieved by a meditative process based on the *coitus reservatus*. Being aware of the fact that every man has in him a feminine element, just as every woman has in her a masculine element, they aimed at rousing the feminine element in the practitioner's body and effectuate there a kind of mystic marriage whereby the sexual duality is overcome, and the ideal of the hermaphrodite achieved. For to them just as to many mystics of other times and places, the hermaphrodite was the closest human likeness to the deity. Tucci observes: "the disciple, through the sexual act, reproduces the creative moment. But the act must not be performed down to its natural consequences; it should be controlled by *prāṇāyāma* (the ancient Yoga method of breath-control, v. G.), in such a manner that the semen goes its way backwards, not flowing downwards but ascending upwards, until it reaches the top of the head, hence to vanish into the uncreated source of the Whole" (TPS, p. 242).

The Vajrayānic theory underlying this process is that the sexual dualism in the human body resides in two nerve channels that run along the left and

¹ Cf. the detailed description of the Double Maṇḍala in my book "Siddham, an Essay on the history of Sanskrit studies in China and Japan", Nagpur 1955, p. 49 sq.

right of the spinal chord, and called respectively *lalanā* and *rasanā*. *Lalanā* is female, it represents female creative energy (*śakti*), mother, the ova (*rakta* "the red"), the vowel-series (*ālī*), and it corresponds to the moon; in final sublimation it is the Void (*śūnyatā*), and also gnosis (*prajñā*). *Rasanā*, on the other hand, is male; male creative energy (*puruṣa*), father, semen (*śukra*), the consonant series (*kālī*), and it corresponds to the sun; in final sublimation it is Compassion (*karuṇā*), and also praxis (*upāya*). As long as this dualism exists in man, he remains caught in the *samsāra*, the "chain of rebirths", and separated from the deity.

In order to overcome this dualism the practitioner, joined in imagined or real sexual embrace with a female partner, concentrates on the bodhi-mind (*bodhicitta*), which resides in germinal form in the *nirmāṇa-cakra*, the nerve centre round his navel. The female energy acquired from the woman stimulates the *bodhicitta* of the man, it blends with his activated but unshed semen into a new, powerful essence now called *bindu*, the drop, here: "translated semen". The *bindu* is built up out of the essence of the five elements (earth, water, fire, air and ether), just as the human embryo; in fact its formation in the practitioner's body is compared to the normal conception in the uterus (cf. ORC, p. 21). The *bindu* breaks through the separation of *lalanā* and *rasanā*, and opens up a new, a-sexual nerve channel technically called *avadhūtikā*, "the cleansed one". The *bindu* blazes upward along this channel, to the *dharmacakra*, the nerve centre in the heart region. From there it rises further to the centre of the throat, *sambhoga-cakra*, finally to reach the *uṣṇīṣa-kamala*, the "Lotus on top of the head". During its course upwards the *bindu* has blended its five composing elements into one homogeneous effulgence. In the *uṣṇīṣa-kamala* this effulgence makes *śūnyatā* and *karuṇā*, *prajñā* and *upāya* merge in perfect union, thereby completing the final identification of the practitioner with the deity and with the Void, a state of eternal bliss called *nirvāṇa*, or also *mahāsukha*.

The decisive stage of the process is the first, namely the formation of the *bindu*, effectuated through the stimulus received from the woman partner. Some texts represent her as an image evoked by concentrated meditation, and the union with her as a spiritual one. Most texts, however, state that she must be a real woman, stating plainly that "Buddha-hood abides in the female organ" *buddhatvaṃ yoṣit-yoni-samāśritaṃ* (cf. C. Bendall quoting the *Subhāṣita-saṃgraha*, in "Muséon", 1903-1904), and that the uterus is in fact *prajñā* (cf. ITB, p. 102 sq., and also SM, p. XXXII). Some sources say that this woman should be the properly initiated practitioner's wife, but according to others he may choose any woman he likes; they recommend even a low-born woman or a pariah, *caṇḍālī* or *ḍombī*, as particularly suited for the purpose.

In this connection it must be noted that the *avadhūtikā*, the neutral channel, is also called *caṇḍālī* or *ḍombī*.

The above description proves how heavily the Vajrayāna relied on older Buddhist and Hindu thought. The three centres *nirmāṇa*, *dharma* and *sambhoga* are of course derived from the three *kāya* (mystic bodies) of the Buddha, and the raising of the Bodhicitta echoes the Mahāyānic doctrine of the *daśabhūmi*, the ten stages to be gone through for reaching Buddha-hood, in itself a version of the Hindu yoga-meditation. However, the conception of the *coitus reservatus* supplying a short-cut to complete enlightenment was an entirely new element, in that form unknown in pre-Vajrayāna Buddhism.

Hindu sexual mysticism as practised by the Śaiva Śākta sects is based on the same principle.

Just as the Vajrayānists, so also the Śāktas borrowed the greater part of their philosophy from already existant sources. Their pantheon is headed by the divine pair of Śiva and his spouse Pārvatī. Śiva, traditionally the god of destruction and also of regeneration, is conceived by the Śāktas primarily as sun god, and Pārvatī as the moon, his reflected glory. However, she is also his *śakti* or female energy, and as symbol of the creative energy of the universe she became a powerful goddess on her own account. Being amalgamated with other female deities, some of apparent non-Aryan origin,¹ she soon relegated Śiva to a secondary position. In many later Śākta tantras she appears as the Instructress who answers her husband's questions—not unlike the Plain Girl, Su-nü, who in the ancient Chinese handbooks of sex supplies the answers to the questions placed before her by the Yellow Emperor. Finally she, as final symbol of *śakti*, became the Mahādevī, the Great Goddess who gave her name to the system.

The Śāktas call the two nerve channels that contain the sexual dualism in the human body respectively *piṅgalā* (= *rasanā*) and *iḍā* (= *lalanā*). The former, red in colour, stands for Śiva, male energy, and the sun. The latter, of a pale grey colour, for Pārvatī, female energy (*śakti*), and the moon. The process of breaking through the separation of these two under the stimulus of imagined or real *coitus reservatus* with a female partner, is called *kuṇḍalinī-yoga*.² For the

¹ Cf. PSH chapter VI "Non-Aryan influences favouring Śāktism", where Dravidian elements are stressed.

² Curiously enough a symbol of this most secret phase of the process can today still be observed as displayed on the street in India, namely in the performance of the snake-charmer. The genuine, original snake-charmers were Kānpṛaṭṭa yogis, adepts in sexual mysticism, who roam the countryside collecting money by juggling, palmistry etc. (cf. GKY, p. 23). Making the coiled cobra rise by playing the gourd-flageolet was originally

dormant female energy in the yogi's body is called technically *kuṇḍalinī* "the coiled one", or serpent. After *kuṇḍalinī* has been roused, she creates a new, a-sexual nerve channel here called *suṣumnā*, and the unshed, "translated semen" is made to ascend along this channel till it reaches the brain. There the final union with the deity (*advaya*) is visualized as the embrace of Śiva and Pārvatī.

In Śāktism the upward course is divided into six stages, or two more than those of the Vajrayānic system.¹ Plate XXI is a North-Indian drawing that depicts these six stages. The lowest nerve centre where *kuṇḍalinī* slumbers is a four-petalled lotus of crimson colour, called *mūlādhāra* and located between the genitals and the anus; *kuṇḍalinī* dwells there in the form of a golden serpent coiled round a phallic pillar, the *liṅga* representing the male element. The second is a yellow, six-petalled lotus called *svādiṣṭhāna*, located at the root of the genitals. The third is a grey, ten-petalled lotus called *maṇipūraka* and located behind the navel. The fourth is a white (or red) twelve-petalled lotus, called *anāhata* and found in the heart region. The fifth is a purple, sixteen-petalled lotus called *viśuddha*, behind the throat. And the sixth is a white, two petalled lotus called *ājñā*, located between the eyes. The highest place in the brain where the union of the male and female poles is consummated is a lotus flower with thousand petals called *sahasrāra*. There the *nirvāṇa-cakra* is located, the centre of great bliss, *mahāsukha*. It may be added that each *cakra* has its own presiding deities, its own magic syllables, and its own method of meditation. An extensive description will be found in SP, based on the *Ṣaṭ-cakra-nirūpaṇa*, a Śākta Tantra written in the 16th century by Pūrṇānanda, a well-known Tantric adept of Bengal.

Thus also in the Śākta-system the first phase of the process is the decisive one, namely the rousing of the female energy through the *coitus reservatus* and the creation of the "translated semen". Also here this mystic birth is completely identified with biological conception; it is described as the blending of the white semen (*śīta-bindu*) with the red ovum (*śoṇa-bindu*), the two creative forces symbolized by Śiva and Pārvatī (ITB, p. 116).

Just as in higher Vajrayāna, the *dakṣiṇācārīs* or "right-path" Śāktas can rouse *kuṇḍalinī* in solitary meditation. As a Tantra says; "What need do I

an aid in studying the rousing of *kuṇḍalinī*. When the yogis noticed that the man in the street was fascinated by this exercise and willing to pay for seeing it, they included it as one more trick in their bag. Then snake-charming was taken up by all kinds of itinerant jugglers and mountebanks who are of course ignorant of its venerable origin. Cf. Pott, *op. cit.* p. 31.

¹ The Buddhist picture from Bengal reproduced in ECP, Plate III must emanate from a later Vajrayānic sect that had come under Śākta influence, for it depicts the six Śākta centres.

have of any other woman? I have an Inner Woman within myself" (SP, p. 295). He who has mastered this spiritual *coitus reservatus* is called *ūrdhva-retas* "with semen flown upward", a term also used in older Sanskrit texts for a man who has completely subdued all carnal desire. "According to Hindu ideas the semen exists in a subtle form throughout the whole body. Under the influence of the will it is withdrawn and elaborated into a gross form in the sexual organs. To be *ūrdhva-retas* is not merely to prevent the emission of gross semen already formed but to prevent its formation as gross seed, and its absorption in the general system" (SP, p. 199, footnote 1). Just as his Chinese Taoist colleague, the Śākta adept considered the semen his most precious possession. The *Haṭha-yoga-pradīpikā* says: "He who knows Yoga should preserve his semen. For the expenditure of the latter tends to death, but there is life for him who preserves it" (SP, p. 189, footnote 2). As spiritual female partner the *dakṣiṇācārīs* employ the "chosen goddess" *iṣṭadevatā*, whose image they evoke complete with all her ornaments and attributes. And if they employ a real woman, then she is the wedded wife, who has been duly initiated into the spiritual significance of the ritual.

However, the *vāmācārīs* or "left-path" Śāktas unite with an unrelated woman, and just as in the Vajrayāna here also the lowest possible woman is recommended for the purpose. The left-path yogi is beyond good or bad, promiscuous sexual intercourse is but one of the five orthodox "sins" he may indulge in, viz. *madya* "wine", *māṃsa* "meat", *matsya* "fish", *mudrā* "parched grain", and *maithunā* "sexual intercourse". This quintet is called *pañca-tattva* the "Five Essentials", or also *pañca-makāra*, the "Five M.'s".

The Vajrayāna practically disappeared in India in the 12th century at the time of the Muslim conquests, to live on in Tibet, Nepal, China and parts of SE Asia. Śāktism, on the contrary, continued to flourish in India and still exists today, so that Orientalists can study its sexual techniques as practised by living yogis. The first student who thoroughly explored this field was Sir John Woodroffe.¹ In his book "The Serpent Power" he describes i.a. the ability of

¹ Under the pen-name "A. Avalon" he published a number of books and articles on Śāktism, including SP and SHSH quoted here, and he also edited the series "Tantrik Texts" which for the first time made important Tantras generally available in Sanskrit, often accompanied by an annotated translation. Sir John Woodroffe had made a profound study of the subject, and collected a vast amount of valuable data. When using those, however, one has to keep in mind that the violent criticism directed at him from various quarters had forced upon him the role of apologist of Tantrism, and that therefore he became prone to lay too much stress on the elevated philosophical aspects of the system, while glossing over its more dubious traits. Further, he had adopted the attitude of the old-style Indian scholars who thought that ideas in themselves must be our main concern, and that their historical origin and development are of minor importance. Payne calls this ignoring of the historical perspective correctly one of the chief weaknesses

a yogi to draw air and fluid into the urethra and out, and then remarks: "Apart from its suggested medical value as a lavement of the bladder it is a *mudrā* (here: physical technique, v. G.) used in sexual connection whereby the Haṭhayogi sucks into himself the forces of the woman without ejecting any of his force or substance—a practice which is to be condemned as injurious to the woman who 'withers' under such treatment" (SP, p. 201, footnote 1). I draw attention to the similarity of this technique to that practised by some ancient Chinese Taoist adepts, described on pp. 158–159 hereabove. Further, present-day left-path Śākta sects practise sexual mass rituals that remind one of the Taoist *ho-ch'i* ritual mentioned on p. 89 above. In India this ritual is called *gaṇa-cakra* "mass circle" or also *cakra-pūjā* "circle ritual". Men and women gather in the deep of night and after partaking of wine and meat and the recitation of spells, a naked woman is placed in the centre of the circle and done homage to. Thereafter all present engage in sexual intercourse, each man either with a chosen partner, or with a woman decided upon by drawing lots. In the Himalayan districts where this practice survives, the breast-cloths of the women are drawn as lots, a ritual called *colī-mārg* (cf. descriptions in PSH, p. 15 sq.; GKY, p. 172; SHSH, p. 583).

Although such rituals often degenerated into gross license, and although some Haṭhayogis considered their woman-partners as mere instruments for reaching their own aims, it must be stressed that Tantrism on the whole enhanced the position of woman in India, just as Taoism did in China. Contrary to traditional Hinduism, Tantrism considered woman as equal to or even higher than man, and the Tantrists were among the early opponents of *suttee*, the burning of widows (PSH, p. 56). The *Kaulāvalī-tantra* says: "One should bow to any female, be she a young girl, flushed with youth, or be she old, be she beautiful or ugly, good or wicked. One should never deceive, speak ill of, or do ill to, a woman and one should never strike her. All such acts prevent the attainment of *siddhi* (i.e. success in religious exercise. v. G.)" (cf. *Karpūrādi-stotram*, published by A. Avalon in "Tantrik Texts" vol. IX, London 1922, p. 23).¹

in Avalon's oeuvre (PSH, p. 61). A practical inconvenience is that none of his books contain a good Index.

¹ Having perused this summary of Buddhist and Śākta sexual mysticism, it will have struck the reader that there are striking parallels with modern psycho-analytical theories. It would indeed be worth while to consider Indian, Chinese and Tibetan sexual mysticism from the viewpoint of analytical psychology. Apart from such obvious resemblances as that of the *libido* to *śakti* in its sense of universal creative energy, the adept's raising of the "serpent power" could be explained as an attempt at crossing the boundary between the individual consciousness and the collective unconscious. That would clarify why each of the nerve centres to be pierced is a *maṇḍala*, a magic circle

If now we re-examine the statements of the Chinese physician Sun Szû-mo and the other T'ang writers quoted at the head of this Appendix, it will be clear that the Taoist process of making the "translated semen return" as described by them was influenced by Indian Tantrism.

The two component parts of the "translated semen" are described by Sun Szû-mo as having the shape of a red sun and a yellow moon. To the best of my knowledge this point is not found in older Taoist texts describing the discipline, but it is found in Tantrism, as we have seen above. Then, Sun calls the spot in the head where the final merger is effected *ni-huan*. The literal translation "pellet (huan) of mud (ni)" makes no sense. H. Maspéro is doubtless right in taking this term as a Chinese transcription of the Sanskrit *nirvāṇa*.¹ And we have seen in the above that in Tantrism too this spot is called *nirvāṇa-cakra*, and the bliss there obtained *nirvāṇa*.

Further, Tantrism compares the creation of the "translated semen" in the adept's body with the formation of the embryo in the uterus. This reminds us of the Chinese quotation on p. 88 above, where among the "obscene disciplines" practised by the Taoists in the second century A.D., is mentioned i.a. "embracing the Adept's Infant". Since contemporaneous Chinese literature

protected by its own deities and spells. For on the adept's perilous journey into the unconscious he needs solid support so as not to succumb to its centrifugal tendencies that might destroy his mind. It does not seem quite impossible that the adepts in sexual mysticism had come to realize dimly through their experiments the terrors of the unconscious, and that this realization brought into being the Tantrik *bhairava* deities, terrifying shapes of haunting intensity; it seems hardly satisfactory to explain the *bhairava* forms as merely protectors that guard the practitioner against evil influences from *outside*. If one considers them as symbolic renderings of the undefined shapes that loom in the unexplored realm of the unconscious, that would then also explain their role in *bar-do*, the intermediate state between death and re-birth, described in detail in Tibetan texts (cf. W. Y. Evans-Wentz, "The Tibetan Book of the Dead", latest ed. London 1960).

As far as I know the only attempt in this direction is C. G. Jung's commentary on the *Tai-i-chin-hua-tsung-chih*, a Chinese text published by the German Sinologue Richard Wilhelm ("The Secret of the Golden Flower", translated and explained by Richard Wilhelm, with a European commentary by C. G. Jung, London, 1st ed. 1931). I draw special attention to Jung's remark that clinical experience has shown that mandala-like drawings help mental patients in overcoming neurotic tensions. Unfortunately the Chinese text dealt with is wholly unsuited for such a detailed analysis. It is in fact but a secondary collection of extracts from the *Hsing-ming-huai-chih*, a syncretic philosophical treatise compiled in 1622 in a large-size, finely illustrated block-print (cf. Figures 2 and 3 reproduced in the present volume). And even this original book, although interesting as an attempt at combining Taoist alchemy with Buddhist and Neo-Confucianist tenets, does not provide the right primary data needed for an investigation of Chinese sexual mysticism from the angle of analytic psychology. For that purpose one must turn to the basic texts, viz. to the old handbooks of sex, and works as Wei Po-yang's *Ts'an-l'ang-ch'i*.

¹ Cf. H. Maspéro, "Le Taoïsme", publ. Musée Guimet, Paris 1950, p. 93.

gives no further explanation of this "infant" (*ying-êrh*), I there refrained from a further discussion. In the light of the Tantric tenets described hereabove, however, it will now be clear that "embracing the Adept's infant" refers to the creation of the "translated semen" through the *coitus reservatus*, which also in ancient China was viewed as similar to normal biological conception. And we have seen on page 80 above that the third century alchemistic treatise *Ts'ant'ung-ch'i* identifies the biological conception with the alchemistic *opus*, namely the successful commingling of the lead and cinnabar in the cauldron—which points in the same direction.¹

Thus we see that the late Indian Tantric texts on the one hand influenced Chinese writers of the T'ang dynasty, while on the other hand they seem to have undergone the influence of Chinese texts of the 2nd and 3rd centuries. This brings us to the main problem I wished to discuss in this Appendix, namely the historical setting of this connection evidently existing between Indian and Chinese sexual mysticism. On the Chinese side we dispose of dependable historical material, for all the pertaining texts can be dated with reasonable accuracy. On the Indian side, however, there is a large margin of uncertainty, the dates ascribed to basic texts by various modern scholars often lying several centuries apart. Our first task is therefore to try to settle the crucial question of dating sexual mysticism in India.

Even a cursory examination of the development of Indian religious thought suffices to indicate that sexual mysticism based on the *coitus reservatus* must have appeared on the Indian scene at a comparatively late date. Both classical Hinduism and Hinayāna Buddhism had preached the salvation from the chain of rebirths as the devotee's supreme aim; but for reaching that aim they recommended control of carnal desire, and certainly not sexual congress. The Hindu scriptures view the sexual act with awe since it symbolizes macro-cosmic procreation, and hence both the male member, *liṅga*, and the vulva, *yoni*, were objects of veneration; cf. for instance, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* upa nishad, Chapter VI, section 4. There and in similar texts the ritual significance of sexual congress is explained, with added advice on how it should be exercised in order to obtain healthy offspring; these texts address themselves to the householder, not to the prospective adept who strives after overcoming the sexual duality in his own body. Further, Sanskrit handbooks of sex such as the

¹ The *Hsing-ming-kuei-chih* mentioned in the preceding note depicts indeed the "translated semen" as a small child in the practitioner's abdomen, and the "original (completed) essence", *yüan-chên*, as the same small child, now floating above the top of his head.

kāma-sūtra which represent Hindu views on sex-life prevalent ca. the beginning of our era, are also primarily practical handbooks for the householder; they dwell only on the physical aspects of the art of love, nowhere is it suggested that sexual congress might have mystic implications and could assist man in reaching salvation.¹ On the contrary, Sanskrit literature states again and again that for reaching salvation the suppression of sexual desire is a *conditio sine qua non*: carnal desire is the strongest link that keeps man chained to the *samsāra*, it is the greatest obstacle to liberation from his earthly bonds. Indian literature abounds in stories about famous ascetics who though having reached wellnigh divine power by practising austerities, promptly lost all the fruits of their asceticism by the mere looking at a beautiful woman. The same conception is found in early Buddhism, and also in Jainism; in the latter there is even more insistence on continence and a life of extreme austerity (cf. WIL., p. 437 sq., 447–448, etc.).

Thereafter, although Mahāyāna Buddhism included many new female deities in its pantheon, it did not represent those as united in sexual embrace with male gods. The Mantrayāna introduced many more female deities, some of them probably fertility goddesses from the South, others she-devils (*dākinī*) and witches from the North. In Mantrayānic texts some of these goddesses are represented as teaching the acquisition of *siddhi*, magical abilities including i.e. levitation, making rain, curing snake-bites, casting spells—but not the Tantric arcana of sex. Such Mantrayānic texts were at an early date imported into China and eagerly studied there. But neither the Indian originals nor the Chinese translations suggest that magical abilities could be acquired by sexual congress. And neither do the Chinese commentaries, although as we have seen in Chapter V of the present volume from Pao-p'u-tzu's quotations, those very ideas were widely current at that time in China.

The Chinese pilgrim Fa-hsien (317–420 A.D.), who traveled extensively in India and adjacent countries, does not mention having found sexual mysticism there. He was a man of profound Chinese learning who as a matter of course was familiar with the Chinese handbooks of sex. If he had noticed similar beliefs in India, he would certainly have mentioned that link with Chinese thought, and utilized it for his missionary efforts among his countrymen. Neither do the Chinese pilgrims Hsüan-tsang (612–664 A.D.) or I-ching (635–713 A.D.) mention having met with those practices in India. They do refer to Mantrayānic sorcery and magic prevailing in various regions they visited, but they do not speak of sexual mysticism.

¹ In ECP, vol. I page 101 I posed the question why those Indian handbooks of sex do not refer to sexual mysticism. My further studies as contained in this Appendix supply the simple answer: at that date sexual mysticism was not yet existent in India.

Besides these arguments *ex silentio*, there is also more convincing, positive evidence of the late appearance of the Vajrayāna in India. Hsüan-tsang states that when ca. 640 A.D. he visited the university of Nālandā, the famous seat of Buddhist learning in S. Bihar, he was deeply impressed by the piety and decorous behaviour of the monk-students, and he speaks highly of the lofty minds of the teachers there. And I-ching speaks with reverence about the strict adherence to monastic rules and saintly manner of living of teachers and students which he observed in Nālandā ca. 690 A.D. However, only a hundred years later, under the Pāla dynasty, Nālandā had become transformed into the great centre of Vajrayānic teachings. It was from there that eager missionaries spread sexual mysticism to Nepal, Tibet, China and parts of SE Asia. One may therefrom conclude that Hsüan-tsang and I-ching witnessed the last decades of the ascendancy of non-Vajrayānic Buddhism, the time when the tenets of the Vajrayāna were ripening, and when its propagandists were stirring already. Evidently it was those early activities of the Vajrayānists that Wu-hsing, another Chinese pilgrim who met I-ching in India before 658 A.D., refers to when he states in a letter from India: "Recently there has arisen a new religious method of the Mantrayāna, which is revered all over the country".¹

This tallies with the fact that the first Indian Tantric missionaries arrived in China in the first half of the 8th century. Śubhakarasiṃha arrived in 716 in the T'ang capital, Vajrabodhi arrived in Canton in 719, bringing with him the great Amoghavajra, who returned to India but came back to China in 750 A.D. These missionaries imported into China a number of Tantric texts which were translated into Chinese and studied by Chinese scholars, as testified by the Taoist texts quoted on pp. 193–200 above.

On the basis of the above data we may assume that it was from ca. 600 to ca. 700 A.D. that the Vajrayāna developed in India as a new offshoot of the Mantrayāna.

This corresponds with the earliest date that can be established for the Vajrayānic Tantras. One of the most important early Tantras, the *Guhyasamāja*, is connected with Indrabhūti, King of Uḍḍiyāna at the end of the 7th, and the beginning of the 8th century (TPS, p. 212). In this text we find the Vajrayāna as a well-defined system of sexual mysticism (cf. WIL, vol. II, p. 394 sq.), which is confirmed by Tibetan sources. Indrabhūti is also credited with the authorship of other Tantric texts (SM, p. LI), and his sister, the equally

¹ Cf. TPS, p. 225, quoting an article by Lin Li-kouang on Puṇyodaya, in "Journal Asiatique", 1935. The Chinese sentence translated is *chün-chê hsin yü chên-yen chiao-fa, chü-kuo ch'ung-yang* (cf. Chinese characters in Index). *Hsin* belongs to *chiao-fa*, prolepsis being commonly used in Chinese to achieve a balanced sentence.

famous female adept Lakṣmīnkarā has to her name the *Advaya-siddhi* which preaches i.a. that the Tantric adept is beyond good and bad (SM, p. LV). A check of the *guru-paramparā*, the succession-lists of teachers and pupils who transmitted the Buddhist Tantras attached to the *Cakrasaṃvara* and *Hevajra* Tantras (SM, pp. XL–XLIV) confirms that the first Vajrayānic texts were composed in ca. 650–700 A.D.

As regards the Śākta tantras, despite the claims to high antiquity recorded in many of them, none of those studied so far seem to date from before the 10th century, and most of the better-known ones were composed between the 12th and the 16th century A.D. It would seem, therefore, that the Śāktas took over the sexual mysticism of the *coitus reservatus*, and the cult of an all-powerful god of the sun, from the Vajrayānists. Yoga-disciplines and the cult of female deities had prepared the ground for it.¹ Also archeological data point to Śāktism having developed later than the Vajrayāna. The great Sun temple with the erotic representations at Konarak dates from ca. 1200 A.D. (WIL, vol. I, p. 535), and the similarly decorated temples of Khajuraho in Bundelkand from ca. 1000 A.D.²

The *Sādhana-mālā*, the earliest known manuscript of which bears the date 1165 A.D., mentions four sacred places, *pīṭha*, as the traditional centres of Vajrayānic worship (cf. SM, p. XXXVIII, BI p. 16). These are Kāmākhyā, Sirihāṭṭa, Uḍḍiyāna and Pūrṇagiri. Kāmākhyā is the modern Kamrup, near Gauhati. Sirihāṭṭa is the modern Sylhet, NE of Dacca. Thus these two are located in Assam. The third, Uḍḍiyāna, has been proved by Tucci to be identical with Swāt, on the NW frontier of India (TPR-S, note 1 on p. 324). The fourth had not yet been identified.³

The fact that two centres were situated on India's NE border, and one—and a very important one—on the NW frontier, in my opinion suggests a plausible theory concerning the origin of the Vajrayāna. Since sexual mysticism based on the *coitus reservatus* flourished in China since the beginning of our era, whereas it was unknown in India, it seems obvious that this particular feature of the Vajrayāna was imported into India from China, probably via Assam. And the fact that beyond the NW frontier there were established at that same time important centres of sun-fire cults of Iranian origin, suggests

¹ Cf. SM, p. XLXVII. WIL, p. 401 opposes this view, mainly because of the large number of Śaiva gods, names and terms found in the Buddhist Tantras; but this seems hardly valid proof, for both Buddhist and Śākta Tantrism drew from the same sources, i.a. pre-Śākta Śaivism.

² The sexual representations on these temples have given rise to much speculation. Cf. the excellent article by Hermann Goetz, "The historical background of the great temples of Khajuraho", in "Arts Asiatiques", vol. V, 1958.

³ Poona has been proposed, but I agree with SM, page XXXVII that this is most unlikely. One would rather think of some place in Kashmir.

that the second fundamental principle of the Vajrayāna, namely the central cult of the sun-god Vairocana, was also imported into India from outside.

With his keen apperception for religious problems Tucci sketched the general atmosphere of the rise of sexual mysticism in India in the following words: "The Tantras may in fact be best defined as the expression of Indian gnosis, slowly elaborated, by a spontaneous ripening of indigenous currents of thought and under occasional influences from outside, in one of those periods when the ups and downs of history and commercial relations brought India closer to the Roman-Hellenistic, Iranian and Chinese civilizations" (TPS, p. 210). If one changes here "under occasional influences from outside" into "under the impact of strong influences from outside", we obtain, I think, a statement that comes as near to the historical truth as possible at this stage of our knowledge.

As regards the Chinese contribution, the two pīṭha Kāmākhyā and Sirihattā supply a clue to the probable road along which Chinese sexual mysticism entered India. Both are located in Assam, a region where magic and sorcery flourished, where women had a higher position than in India proper, and which had close relations with China. Bhāskaravarman who in the 7th century was King of Kāmarūpa was an adept in Mantrayānic magic, and claimed for his dynasty Chinese origin; he had regular relations with the T'ang Court (cf. LTF). And it has been proved that in the 8th century sexual rites were flourishing in the monasteries of nearby Pagan (cf. Ch. Duroiselle's article "The Arī of Burma and Tantrik Buddhism", Arch. Service of India, Annual Report 1915-16, pp. 79-93). That area seems therefore the most obvious link. But one must not neglect either possible infiltration into India via the northern routes through Central Asia, while perhaps a third link was supplied by the southern sea-route.¹

It should be noted that Vajrayānic tradition mentions China as the origin

¹ Prof. P. Demiéville kindly drew my attention to the article by J. Filliozat entitled "Taoisme et Yoga", publ. in "Bulletin Dan Viet Nam", June 1949, Saigon. There it is pointed out that Tamil texts mention an old South-Indian tradition of travels to China by Indian sages, and that in the Tamil region of Madras and Pondicherry there are current legends about such sages who after their return to India taught what they had learned in China. Filliozat also draws attention to the fact that some Tamil texts on alchemy set forth theories that closely resemble those of Chinese Taoist speculations rather than the classical Indian teachings; they divide, for instance, minerals in male and female, which reminds one of the Chinese *yin-yang* classification.

We must also take into account the tradition that Nāgārjuna received the Vajrayānic doctrine from Vairocana in the "iron stūpa", in *South India* (ORC, p. 17). Although some Japanese sources state that "iron stūpa" here signifies the human body rather than a geographical locality (cf. TIC, p. 281, note 47), there are so many features that point to South India that a special investigation of Tantrism in that region including Ceylon seems indicated.

of its doctrine. The *Rudra-yāmala* narrates in ch. 17 how the sage Vasiṣṭha, son of God Brahma, practised austerities for uncounted ages without succeeding in making the Supreme goddess appear before him. Then his father advised him to try to obtain the "pure cīnācāra", the "Chinese discipline", for the great goddess takes pleasure in that (śuddha-cīnācāra-ratā). Then Vasiṣṭha practises austerities on the shore of the ocean, and finally the goddess appears. She orders him to proceed to China, there he shall learn the truth. Vasiṣṭha thereupon goes to China, and there sees the Buddha surrounded by numerous naked adepts who drink wine, eat meat and engage in sexual congress with beautiful women. Vasiṣṭha is greatly perturbed by this sight but then the Buddha teaches him the true significance of the sexual rites, and of the use of the *pañca-makāra*. Another Tantra of great authority, the *Brahma-yāmala*, gives substantially the same story (cf. SM, p. CXL; SHSH, chapter VIII; LTF). Evidently it is an allegorical rendering of a historical fact.¹

Sylvain Lévi correctly interpreted these and similar passages, i.e. in the *Tārā-tantra*, in the sense that Chinese influence contributed to the birth of Tantric doctrines (cf. LTF). Tucci objected to this, stating: "One should remember that the Mahā-cīnakrama (another term for cīnācāra. v. G.) is chiefly connected with worship of deities in female form, and indulges in sexual symbolism which is so repulsive to the Chinese that when they translated Tantric works they often omitted or changed passages which seemed objectionable to their moral sense" (TPR-N, p. 103, footnote 3). The modern Chinese scholar Chou Yi-liang states in connection with the Chinese expurgation of Tantric texts: "Śakti worship never became popular in China, where Confucianism forbade any close relationship between men and women" (TIC, p. 327). I trust that the facts recorded in the present volume will have proved that Tucci and Chou Yi-liang wrongly ascribe to the Chinese of the T'ang dynasty inhibitions and social customs that did not gain ground in China until well into the 13th century. Finally, the theory that the terms Cīna and Mahācīna refer to Assam and adjacent regions rather than to China proper does not of course affect our argument; it would imply only that the authors who used the terms in this sense took cognizance of the Chinese thoughts only in their second stage of importation, namely after they had been introduced into Assam.

That Chinese conceptions found their way to India is only to be expected. We have become so accustomed, however, to view Sino-Indian historical relations as a one-way traffic, a steady flow of Indian thought entering China,

¹ In this connection the tradition of Mañjuśrī having been imported from India into China, then again back from China to Nepal (WIL, vol. II, p. 401, note 1) deserves a further study, also with regard to the "counter-flow" of Chinese thought into India mentioned below.

that we are apt to overlook that there must have been also a strong counter-flow from China to India.

Since Chinese sexual mysticism dates already from the beginning of our era, the question arises why it was only towards the 7th century that these Chinese teachings obtained a foothold in India. I believe the answer to be that before that time India was not yet ready for accepting and absorbing this new doctrine. In the 7th century, however, and more in particular after the death of the great King Harsha of Kanauj in 647 A.D., there began a period of internal strife soon to be followed by the Muslim invasions. Indian religious and philosophical thought was reaching the saturation point, people were becoming impatient with the hair-splitting arguments and mutual incriminations of the countless schools, and with the oppressive insistence on correct ritual and ceremonial. At the same time there was a sharpening of social contrasts, many had begun to rebel against the caste-system and the implied social disabilities. As Tucci remarks: "As it is often the case in epochs of great change, dissatisfaction with the old order went hand in hand with a great desire for all that seemed strange and unusual" (TPS, p. 211). Chinese sexual mysticism, with its Taoist anti-conventional and anti-authoritarian background, stimulated in India the rise of the Tantric doctrine as the formulation of a protest against the existing situation. Tantrism despised all religious and social traditions, it consciously trampled underfoot all the hallowed taboos. It refused to recognize the caste-system, and proclaimed woman to be the equal of man.

While there can be little doubt that the mysticism of the *coitus reservatus* was introduced into India from China, I think that for the second distinctive feature of the Vajrayāna, viz. the sun-cult embodied in Mahā-vairocana, we must turn to the opposite side of the subcontinent, viz. the NW frontier, and more especially the Swāt valley and Kashmir. Beyond lay Tocharistan where the Manichaeans, fleeing eastward from Muslim pressure, had established a stronghold. And there were also flourishing cities like Balkh and Samarkand where the crossroads from East and West met; we know from the Chinese pilgrim Hui-ch'ao that in the 7th century Samarkand was a centre of Zoroaster's teachings, and the great Vajrayānic missionary Amoghavajra may have had family-relations there (cf. TIC, p. 321). Tucci observes: "The conditions prevailing in Swāt were very favourable to the convergence of ideas, situated as it was on the margin of the great thoroughfares which brought the West into contact with the East, with Central Asia and India, and where met, not to repel but to approach another, the most active religions of those times: Buddhism, Manichaeism, Nestorianism, each laden with the spiritual and intellectual traditions of its country of origin and adoption" (TPR-S, p. 282).

Since the outlandish creeds mentioned were essentially sun-fire cults, I assume that it was Iranian influence, entering India from the NW, that contributed to the Vajrayānists adopting a new, supreme sun-god as the head of their pantheon, and as the centre of their esoteric teachings.

We can only make surmises as to the manner in which these two imported currents, the Chinese and the Iranian, met and how, after having absorbed the already existing Mantrayānic background, they then gave rise to a new doctrine. I mention, however, that in both the NE and NW border regions of India there flourished older beliefs in magic, witches and witchcraft, so that these areas provided a suitable breeding ground where related new thoughts could ripen and acquire local colour. Also, it is worth remembering that there existed a brisk foreign trade in these two regions, often conducted by monk-merchants, which promoted an exchange of religious ideas.

In this connection it may be added that although in these pages I have used throughout the name Vajrayāna, the Buddhist Tantras employ a number of other names for designating their doctrine. Usually these different names are said to indicate a chronological sequence, and to refer to the stages of development the Vajrayāna went through. But it seems far more likely that these names point to different local schools which sprang up in different places but at approximately the same time, and which were at a later date fitted into one homogeneous system.

Sexual mysticism, thus firmly established, exercised from then onward a decisive influence on Indian religious life, all through the subsequent periods, including those of Moghul and British rule, down to the present day.

In medieval Bengal, Sahajīya Buddhism carried on the Vajrayānic tradition, then to change into Vaiṣṇava Sahajīya, where the pair Śiva-Pārvatī is replaced by Kṛṣṇa-Radhā, and where carnal love was hallowed by unreserved devotion to the deity and inspired some of India's finest lyrical poetry. Further the Bāṭl sect, a combination of Sahajīya and Muslim Sūfī-mysticism, famous for its impassioned Murshida songs. And various other late offshoots of Buddhist sexual mysticism, so ably described by S. B. Dasgupta (cf. ORC).

Śaiva Śāktism continued to flourish in the NW, the Punjab and Kashmir. A number of its sub-sects, notably that of Goraknāth, sent out their followers all over India, as set forth in detail in Briggs' well-documented study (cf. GKY).

All these later developments fall outside the scope of the present notes. Here I only reiterate the steadily mounting importance in medieval India of Śiva's spouse Pārvatī. Under the influence of Śāktism she absorbed terrifying old goddesses such as Kālī and Durgā, to whom human sacrifices were made,

and thus she developed into Mahādevī, the Supreme Goddess, even more terrifying than her husband Śiva in his traditional aspect of Destructor. As the "Great Mother" she became the all-mighty Womb, which gives birth to everything and by which everything is again destroyed. This gradual transfer of the supreme power from Śiva to his female counterpart is reflected in the Śākta texts. In the earlier Tantras now Śiva, then Pārvatī figures as teacher, but in the later texts the dominant position has shifted completely to Pārvatī. Whereas in the early versions of the process based on the *coitus reservatus* Śiva is the sun and Pārvatī the moon, his reflected glory, the later Tantras reverse the position. There Śiva is the pale moon, while Pārvatī is the sun, the red fire of destruction *kālāgni* (cf. ORC, p. 272, and ITB, pp. 156–157). On page 84 we have seen that in China a similar shift occurred. The Green Dragon, first the symbol of fertilizing male energy, later became the symbol of female creative power.

In India there developed a special cult of the Great Goddess, she assumed the shape of a horrifying blue or red she-devil, dancing on the body of her husband Śiva, a white corpse (*śava*) lifeless but for its erected member (see Plate B, frontispiece verso).¹

As was said before, the Vajrayāna as such became practically extinct in India in the 12th century. But its teachings had been imported into Tibet, where they merged with indigenous Tibetan cults and thus generated Lamaism with its deities clasping their female counterparts in sexual embrace, the well-known *yab-yum* representations. From Tibet, Lamaism spread to Mongolia, where it became the religion of Khubilai Khan and his successors, for a brief period Emperors of China.

Summing up, it may be stated that ancient Chinese Taoist sexual mysticism, having stimulated the rise of Vajrayāna in India, was thereafter re-imported into China in its Indianized version at two different times at least.

First, soon after its formulation and rise in India, by the Indian Tantric missionaries who came to China in the T'ang period. Since at that time in China the teachings of sexual mysticism were still very much alive, Chinese scholars recognized the common traits, and hence incorporated some of the imported Indianized elements in their own systems—as evidenced by the T'ang texts quoted in Ch. VII.

The second time was during the Mongol rule (1280–1367). But then Taoist sexual mysticism was so well disguised in its Lamaist garb that the Chinese

¹ Cf. also H. Zimmer, "Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization" (Washington 1946), the discussions in Chapter V, and plates 66–69.

did not recognize its basic Chinese principles and considered it as an alien creed. We have seen on p. 259 above that the 12th century Chinese scholar Chêng Szû-hsiao who described the statues of Lamaist deities embracing their female counterparts in the Mongol palace, and the sexual rituals performed there, had not the faintest inkling that all this was in reality only an outlandish version of ancient Taoist disciplines.

Finally, on page 261 above mention was made of the fact that during the Ming dynasty these Lamaist *yab-yum* statues preserved in the Imperial Palace were used for instructing the princes and princesses in their marital duties. By putting those statues to this use the Emperor unwittingly restored to them the original function of their ancient, purely Chinese precursors, namely the pictures of the various positions of sexual congress included in the old Chinese handbooks of sex and meant for the instruction of married couples. This closes the curious circle of the manifold peregrinations and permutations of ancient Chinese sexual mysticism.

In the present stage of our knowledge much of what was said in this Appendix must remain mere theory. For obtaining a clearer insight into the circumstances of the rise of the Vajrayāna, and into its exact relation to Śāktism, we shall have to wait till more Buddhist and Hindu Tantric texts have become available, and subjected to a comparative study. If such textual work goes hand in hand with archaeological research, especially in those places in India where at present remnants of Tantrism still survive, we shall then be in a better position to tackle the historical problems.¹

However, since the Chinese data assembled in the body of the present volume allowed a new approach to Indian Tantrism, I thought it might be of some use to append here these few remarks, which do not pretend to be more than an attempt at formulating a preliminary working-hypothesis.

It may be added that as regards a further exploration of Chinese material for more information on Indian Tantrism, the Chinese Buddhist Canon as we have it now offers only limited possibilities. After the authoritarian Chinese state based on Neo-Confucianist principles had in the 14th century been re-established by the Ming dynasty, Chinese Tantrism—*mi-tsung* "secret doctrine"—had small chance of survival. We have seen that the government was wont to take harsh measures against all "secret" cults which they suspected of harbouring subversive political aims; and the official adoption of the bigoted Neo-Confucianist rules made the engaging in "immoral cults",

¹ The excellent results that can be achieved by such a combined investigation on the spot appear convincingly from Prof. G. Tucci's TPS, and more recently TPR-S.

yin-szû, a capital offense. As a measure of self-defense all the Chinese Buddhist sects had to try to make their doctrine conform to the prejudices of the government, and they expurgated the Buddhist Canon, just as the Taoists did with theirs. For complete descriptions of the rites of sexual mysticism as practised in Chinese Tantrism one therefore has to turn to Japanese material.

In the 11th century the priest Nin-kan (1057-1123) founded the Tachikawa sect, as a new branch of Shingon, the Japanese version of the Mantrayāna, and as an attempt to found a Japanese left-path Vajrayāna. He preached that sexual congress was a means for "directly obtaining Buddha-hood through one's living body" *soku-shin jō-butsu*, the indulging in the "Five M.", etc. Since his followers engaged in mass-meetings where the sexual rites were practised, the Japanese authorities forbade the sect. Apparently it continued its activities in secret, however, for as late as 1689 A.D. an orthodox Japanese Buddhist monk found it necessary to protest against the Tachikawa practices.

Only a small number of the Tachikawa texts is available for study, but those suffice for proving them to be based on direct translations of Indian Vajrayānic Tantras, made in China and imported into Japan by Japanese Buddhist pilgrims who visited China during the T'ang dynasty when books on sexual mysticism were still freely circulating. These Tachikawa texts, partly in Chinese, partly in Japanese, describe the Tantric ritual in full, and with illustrations. I mention coloured pictures of the "sexual maṇḍala", also called *Mahāmudrā*, the "Great Mudrā", which can be considered as the essence of the "Double Maṇḍala of the Two Worlds" referred to in the above. It represents a man and a woman, naked but for their ritual headdress, lying in sexual embrace on an eight-petalled lotus flower. The woman lies on her back and the man on top of her, but he has turned 180 degrees from the normal position so that his head is between the woman's feet and her head between his. Their legs and arms are stretched out so as to coincide with the eight petals of the lotus flower. The man's body is white (sometimes yellow), the woman's crimson. The spot where their genitals meet is marked with the magic syllable *a*, in Tantrism considered as the beginning and end of all things.¹ Also the other parts of their bodies are marked with magic spells. Cf. the reproduction of such a maṇḍala in ECP, vol. I, Plate III b.

Most instructive is a Tachikawa picture that might be called "the Spark of Life" (cf. sketch in figure 22). It is a circle surrounded by flames, and containing the images of sun and moon in yellow, and two Sanskrit letters *a* facing each other, one white and the other red. Evidently the white *a* is the semen, the red *a* the ovum. Sun and moon represent the spiritual union of

¹ Cf. the extensive explanation in "Hōbōgirin, Dictionnaire Encyclopédique du Bouddhisme d'après les sources chinoises et japonaises", 1st fascicule (Paris 1934), s.v. *A*.

the male and female principle in the practitioner's mind, the two letters *a* the biological aspect of the union. Thus this picture sums up adequately the Tantric theories of the psycho-physical process based on the *coitus reservatus*.

Some Japanese writers have averred that the Tachikawa texts are mere fabrications by Nin-kan and his followers. But now that the Indian Tantras have been studied we know that the Tachikawa texts correspond to those Sanskrit sources in every detail, and that Nin-kan therefore must have utilized genuine old Chinese translations which he found in Shingon monasteries.

Japanese Buddhologists have shown much reluctance in publishing data regarding the Tachikawa sect. The *Mikkyō-daijiten*, the comprehensive encyclopedia of Shingon (3 vols., Kyōto 1933) gives a brief summary s.v. "Tachikawa", including a schematic drawing of the Mahāmudrā maṇḍala. One of the few special studies on the subject is the book *Jakyō-tachikawa-ryū no kenkyū* "A Study of the Heterodox Tachikawa Sect", published by Mizuhara Gyōei, Tōkyō 1931; opposite page 130 this book gives a detailed picture of the sexual maṇḍala. Mizuhara adds a list containing hundreds of titles of Tachikawa manuscripts, some in Chinese, others in Japanese. A small number of these have been reprinted in the Japanese Buddhist Canon,

but the majority is still lying on the shelves of various monastic libraries in Japan, securely sealed and marked with the century-old notice *ake-bekarazu* "not to be opened". It is to be hoped that modern Japanese Buddhologists will let the cause of the advancement of knowledge prevail over their piety, and that they will open those documents and make their contents available to the learned world. Those texts will doubtless throw much light on the history of Tantrism in India and China, and bring the solution of many a vexing problem.



Figure 22

"The Spark of Life"
Drawing after a
Japanese Tachikawa-text

APPENDIX II

DISTRIBUTION-LIST OF "EROTIC COLOUR PRINTS OF THE MING PERIOD"

(with the exception of the Far East)

<i>Australia</i>	King George Memorial Hospital (University of Sydney).
<i>Belgium</i>	University Library of Louvain.
<i>France</i>	Musée Guimet; Bibliothèque Nationale; Sorbonne.
<i>Germany</i>	Universities of Bonn, Hamburg and Munich.
<i>Great Britain</i>	British Museum, and University libraries of Cambridge and Oxford; Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.
<i>Holland</i>	Royal Library (The Hague), Library of the Museum of Ethnology (Leiden), and University libraries of Amsterdam, Leiden and Utrecht.
<i>India</i>	International Academy of Indian Culture (N. Delhi), Central Archeological Library (N. Delhi), Baroda State Museum (Baroda).
<i>Italy</i>	Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente (Rome).
<i>Sweden</i>	Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities (Stockholm).
<i>Switzerland</i>	Anthropos Institute (Fribourg).
<i>U.S.A.</i>	Library of Congress, Freer Gallery of Art (Washington), Metropolitan Museum, New York N.Y., Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Institute of Psychoanalysis (Chicago), Institute of Sex Research (Indiana University), and the University libraries of Chicago, Columbia (New York), California, Michigan, Harvard, Yale, Washington (Seattle) and Stanford.

PLATES



Plate I. Fu-hsi (R.) and Nü-kua (L.) (Rubbing in the author's collection, after a relief in the Wu-liang temple, Shantung).



Plate II. Han acrobats (Rubbing after a Han stone-relief, re-cut in wood).



Plate III. Palace lady dressing the hair of an Imperial Consort (Section of the hand scroll Nü-shih-chên in the British Museum).

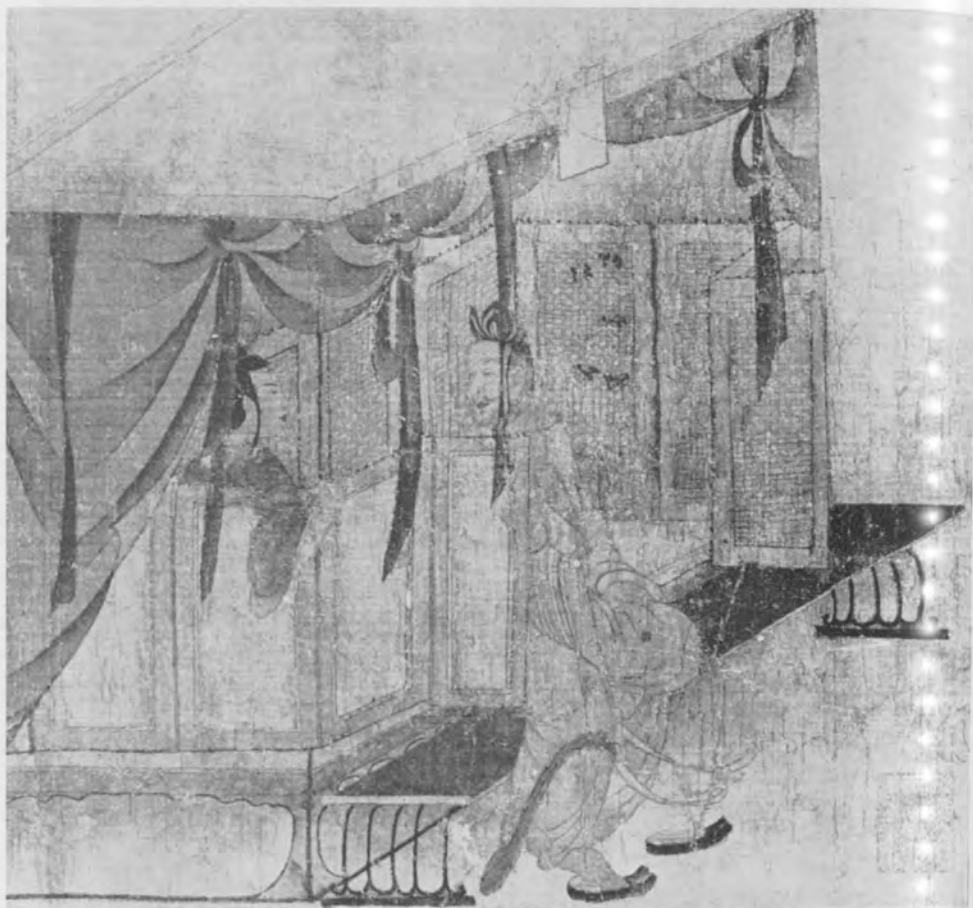


Plate IV. Bedroom scene (Section of the hand scroll reproduced on Plate III).

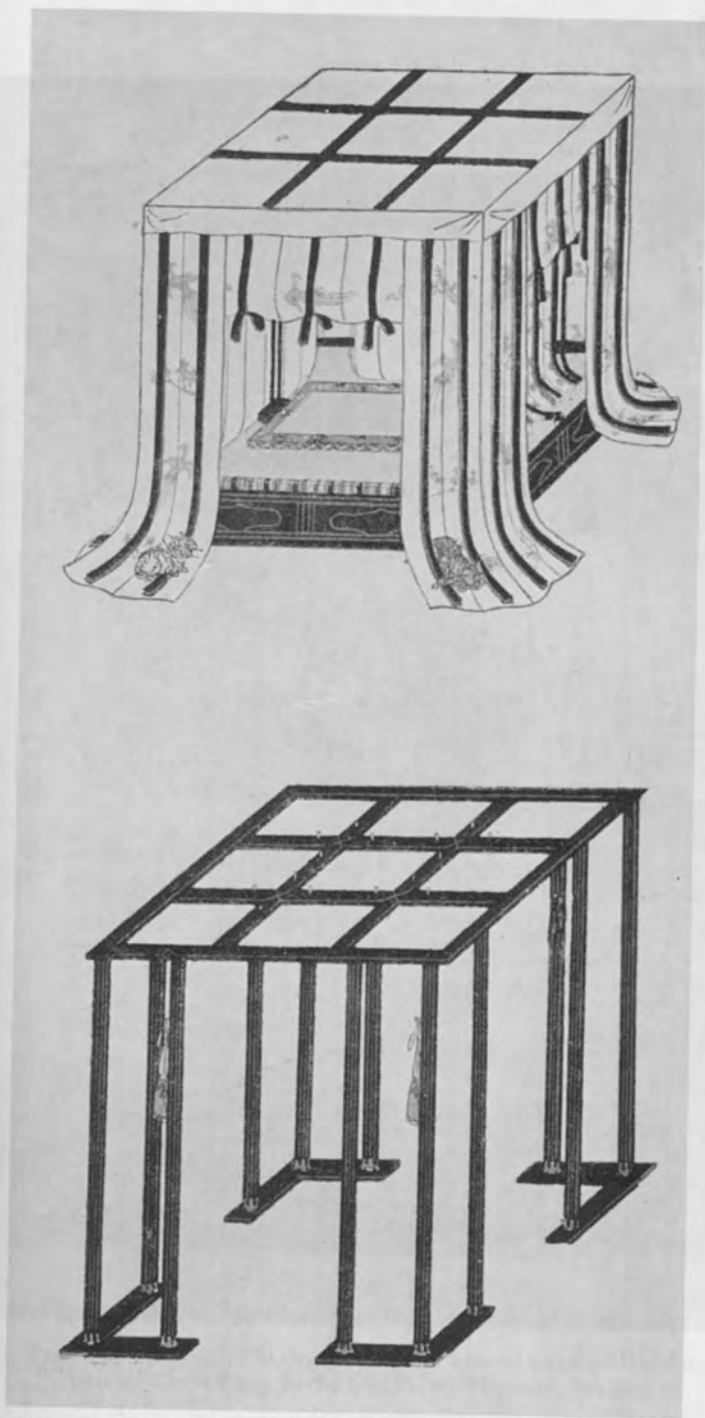


Plate V. Ancient Japanese bedstead (After the Tankaku-zufu).



Plate VI. Lady tuning lute (Section of a hand scroll ascribed to the T'ang painter Chou Fang, in the Old Palace Museum, Peking).



Plate VII. Palace lady playing with dog (Section of a hand scroll ascribed to the T'ang painter Chou Fang, in the Old Palace Museum, Peking).



Plate VIII. T'ang magistrate on horseback (After a Japanese copy of the Fo-shuo-shih-wang-ching).



Plate IX. Taoist adept. Sung clay-statue in the Chin-tz'û, near T'ai-yuan, Shansi Prov. (Detail after Chung-kuo-ku-tai-t'iao-su-chi, Peking 1955).



Plate X. Lady. Sung clay statue in the Chin-tz'û, near T'ai-yuan, Shansi Prov. (Detail after Chung-kuo-ku-tai-t'iao-su-chi, Peking 1955).



Plate XI. Lady, Northern Sung, dated 983 A.D. (Detail of Tun-huang painting, no. 17.662, in the Musée Guimet, Paris).



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Plate XVIII. Ivory figurine, used by physicians. Length 14 cm (author's collection).



Plate XIX. "Afterwards" (From the Ming erotic colour-print album *Fêng-liu-chüeh-ch'ang*).



Detail of "The Six Centres" reproduced herebelow

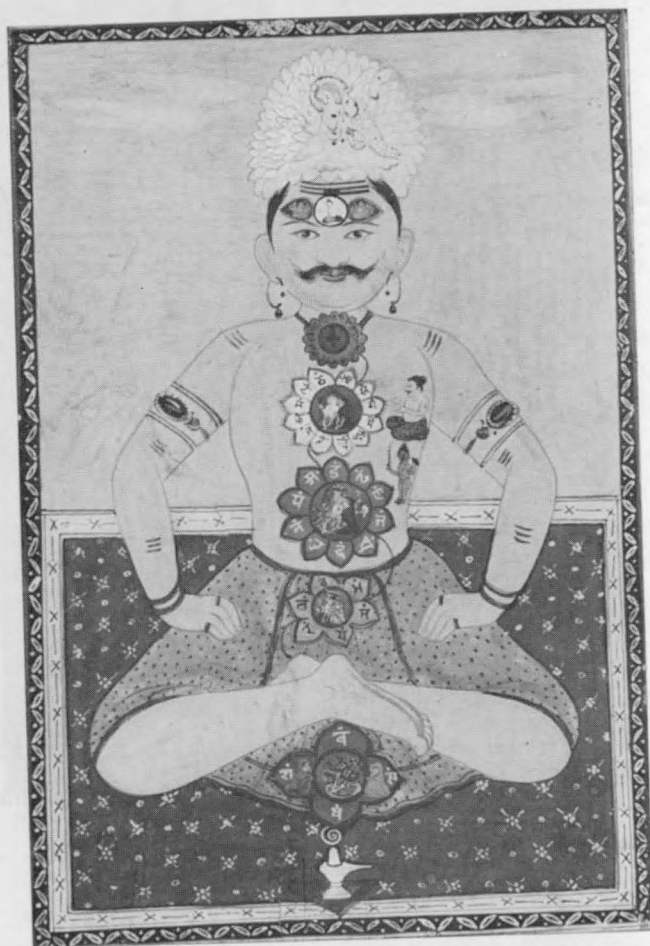


Plate XX. "The Six Centres" (N. Indian painting in colours on paper, author's collection).



Plate XX. "The So Called" Indian painting in
colour on paper, author's collection.

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This Index covers mainly personal names, book-titles, terms and brief quotations; book-titles are underlined. For the sake of brevity names of rulers and reigns, of persons figuring in tales and novels, and geographical names have not been included.

Items listed here are, as a rule, not repeated in the General Index.

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This book contains a complete Chinese-English dictionary, giving the Chinese name and the English name of every thing that is found in China. It is a complete and accurate dictionary, and is the only one of its kind in the world. It is a complete and accurate dictionary, and is the only one of its kind in the world.

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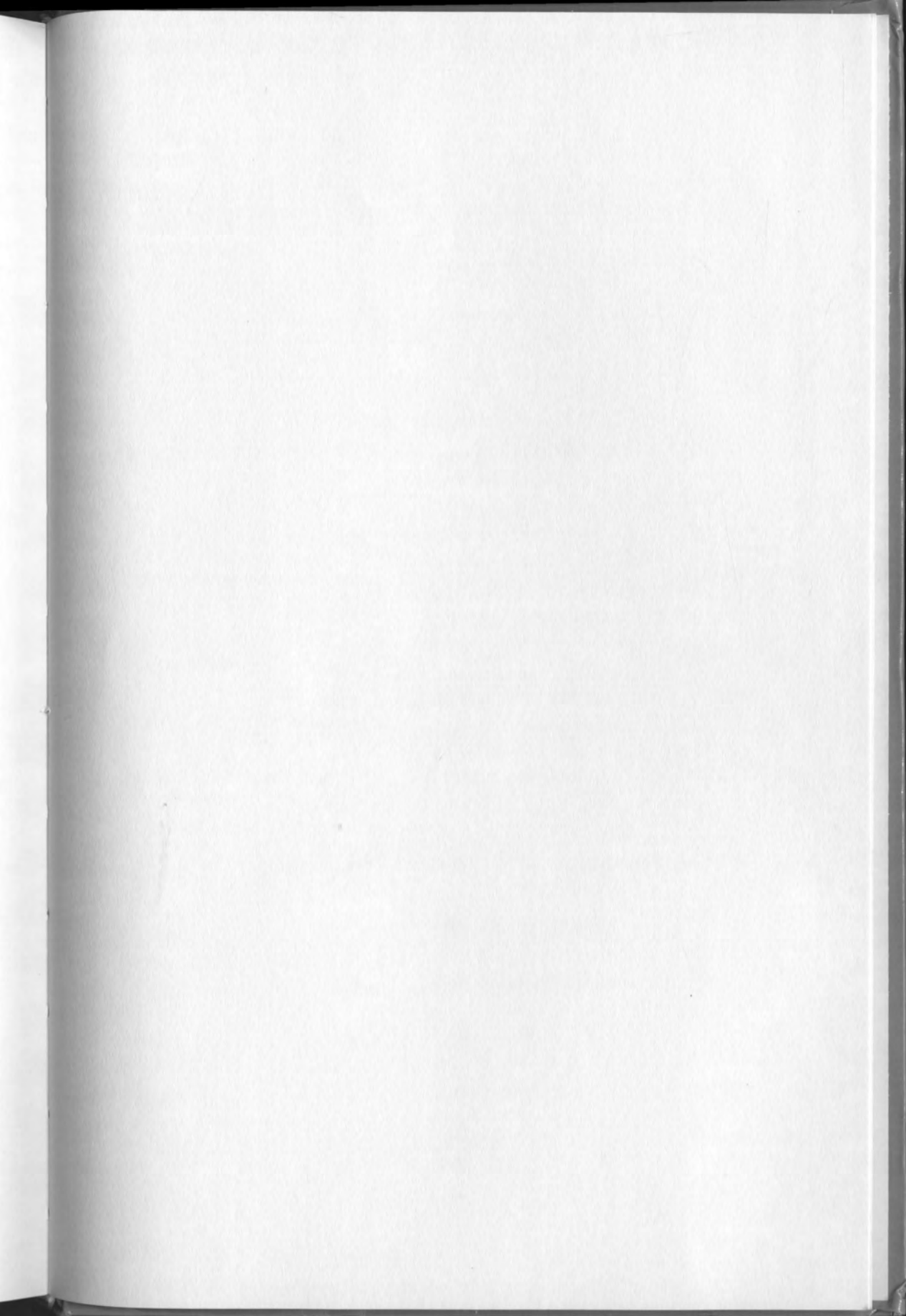
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